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The Yankee School-Teacher in Virginia

By LYDIA WOOD BALDWIN

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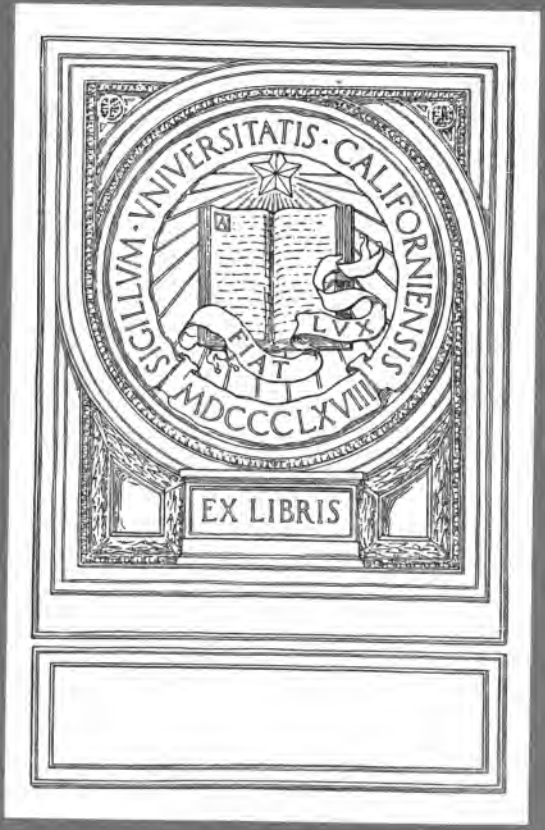

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By LYDIA WOOD BALDWIN.

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A YANKEE SCHOOL-TEACHER IN VIRGINIA

A TALE OF THE OLD DOMINION IN THE TRANSITION STATE

BY

LYDIA WOOD BALDWIN

FUNK & WAGNALLS

NEW YORK
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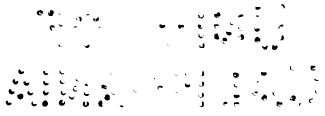

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A YANKEE SCHOOL-TEACHER IN VIRGINIA.

I.

"THE LAND OF WAIT."

ONE evening in December, 1870, Miss Marian Stone, of Massachusetts, found the little world of Chula Depot, in Virginia, before her. She stood a few minutes in an uncertain mood, watching the departing train, and then looked around her.

"This is the 'jumping-off place' I am sure," she murmured. "To think I should have come so far to find it!"

The planks of the platform had decayed in places, and she surveyed it apprehensively as she paced along. "I must learn to pick my way; one can walk in spots, at all events."

She reached the end, and stood there surveying the scenery—a log structure a few rods away, which she reflected about, finally deciding that it was a blacksmith's, although there were no signs of business.

Across the road was a small frame building with a rudely painted sign, "J. R. Mason's Store," a fringe of little black boys outside, and a stout, tall negress turbaned with a yellow kerchief, who stooped to enter the low, open doorway.

It was all so foreign and lonesome to the town-bred Northern girl! Her mind flashed backward toward the beginning of her pilgrimage. Far away rose the picturesque Berkshire hills; stretched away those broad streets, elm-shaded, and lined with white houses rivalling the surrounding snowy drifts. It seemed as if she could hear the merry jingle of the bells as the swift horses dashed by, as if she caught a glimpse of laughing faces snugly hooded with fur and scarlet cloth.

Not a dwelling-house in sight except the little one across the track, built for the station-master's family. She could see a group of barefooted white children in front of the low porch, who watched her movements curiously and chattered concerning them. Some of their talk reached her as she looked up and around, at the frequent glimpses of woodland, at the red clay of the road winding in and out, now lost to sight, then suddenly reappearing far away; at the scanty pastures set in thickets of pines, with red "galls" cropping out unexpectedly, and deep gullies where the soil had baked in the sun's fierce heat and cracked like earthquake seams, then had been washed by driving rains into precipices, disfiguring the landscape.

She crossed the road and entered the store. The negress was drawing rations, a peck of corn-meal and one and a half pounds of bacon. She was laundress for the storekeeper's family, and had come for her weekly supplies. She was just poising her basket on her head to leave, but she set it down to have a good look at the stranger. In that moment Aunt Jinsy had mentally "allowed" her to be "quality."

"I was informed that a Mr. Barstow would meet me to-day," timidly began Miss Marian.

"I declar'!" ejaculated Aunt Jinsy, "I done

b'lieve you mus' be de teacher at las' ! We all on us done giv' up seein' ye 'fore Chris'mas. Mighty nigh t' Chris'mas, suah !"

"I have been quite ill or I should have been here sooner. But how warm and soft the air is now ! And I left snow and ice and cold winds not three days ago ! and over the road are barefooted children playing ! It is wonderful !"

Aunt Jinsy softly laughed. "Oh, yis, dey neber yit has had a shoe on dere foots ; dey jus' don't mind de snow when it come no mor'n dey min' de clay path. But de snow am no 'count here ; it neber las' one week."

"I must find some conveyance to take me to Mr. Barstow's, where I am to board. There don't appear to be many people hereabout."

"Dat dere ain't, honey ! I done hear Mr. Basto say yistiddy he done 'spec' some one mos' any day. 'Pears like he oughter bin here den ! But he am mighty cur'us sort ; him ain't quality sort like what yer'm used ter. I dunno how you'll like ter stay dere."

"We will see about that," smiled Marian, "if I can manage to reach their house."

"I done lib on his farm. Goodmun works his lan' on shares. I'se gwine straight dar. I kin hoof it as easy as ter grub up a sassafras root ; but laws-a-mussy ! you can't tote yerself ha'f dat dist'nce, Missy ! I disremember jess how fur folks say 'tis—six or seven mile I reckin. I know f'r sartain it's a long stretch. Thar now ! jess hush ! don' go fur t' make any racket t' *him*," with a movement of one brawny arm enjoining silence. "Ef you're our teacher he won't go fur ter git yer thar ! He's mighty sot 'ginst us niggers learnin'. All de white folks am sot 'ginst it ! Mass'r Jim Dick

no wuss'n de res'. You jess come outen hyar an' Jinsy 'll see 'bout it."

"I did not know there was such a feeling among the white people," said Marian, hastily leaving the doorway. "Perhaps I might wait at the station?"

"Course you kin. An' I'll start up dat pore creetur arter ye. He's nothin' b't a rack o' bones, b't Steller might come, I reck'n; she done drive de mules eb'rywhar. An' dey've got a right smart kyart 'thout no springs t' speak of, but mighty comfor'ble."

Aunt Jinsy paused for breath, and as she settled her basket firmly anew she threw admiring glances at the girlish figure.

"I'll go along with you, Aunty. I cannot wait here; such a desolate place I never saw before. I don't like to see you vanish away."

"Jis' so!" assented Jinsy, admiring the sound of the "dictionary word," which she failed to understand. "Mighty nice country! I'se done raised nigh about. Dar now, honey! yer walks off right peart! I'm boun' t' keep close behin'. De road am somewhat lonesome, b't mighty pleasant—" Jinsy's foot caught in a deep rut and she went down on one knee. "Dar now!" Miss Marian heard her muttering, as she picked herself up, "I feel swear-words when I done do anythin' so simple as dat! 'fore de teacher, too! Shouldn't wonder if dey go f'r t' turn me outen de church."

"I wish you would come up. I wish to talk to you," said Marian.

"Dar now! I c'n hear ye, honey, eb'ry word. Yer voice's like music, jess like de tinkle o' our white ladies' pianny. Tink I dunno how ter treat white ladies? mus' keep 'spec'ful distince; dat am de bery way Jinsy was raised.

"Dis now am Flat Crick. An' mighty drizzlin' it looks now. We c'n step over 'thout de bridge, b't in de long season in May, when de rain jess 'pears like t' pour, dar's no cross'n', even on de bridge—de waters done kiver it. I declar' I seen a man on hossback once try f'r t' swim over—mus' a had some pow'ful reason f'r gittin' across! Him done come mighty nigh drownin'."

"But how, then, do they cross?"

"Well, honey, dey jess goes f'r t' wait. De water goes down in two days mos'ly—dey jess has ter wait."

"So this is the Land of Wait?" mused Marian. "Oh, this is a pretty place!" she added, as hedges of osage orange suddenly appeared on either side of the road, which grew smoother. It was merely a "plantation road" made for the owner's convenience. On and on they stretched, and presently a square, frame, whitewashed mansion, low, with broad verandas, and overshadowed by stately trees, appeared. As they passed Marian saw trellises for clambering roses, but the fence was too high for any other glimpse of the garden.

"Dat am my ole home! Mas'r Peyton Mason's place whar I wus raised," said Jinsy proudly. "De white folks call it de 'Hermitage.' Mighty nice plantation in slave time, b't sort o' run down now—heaps o' good lan' turned out ter ole field."

"And pray what is that?" queried Marian.

"Why, when dey don't raise nuffin f'r years an' years, an' de pines done spring up eb'rywhar, an' de branch lan's done go ter swamps, an' sumake an' sassyfras choke up de good lan' so it's all a waste o' weeds an' brambles an' dewberry vines, dey calls it ole field. Dar's a big plantation ober yere called King's Ole Field, case it's all turned out ter ruin. I 'member when 'twas

mos' beautiful. Miss Otely an' Miss Betty am all dat's leff yere; dey dunno noth'n' 'bout managin' no mor'n a baby. Dey t'ink dey great bis'ness ladies. Some lan's been sold off ter pay debts long 'nough 'fore Mas'r Peyton died; de lan' am worked on shares now; an' de men jess picks out de good spots, and don't use de grubb'n' hoe like dey used ter in de ole time. Dere wa'n't no sassyfras 'lowed den ter grow in de cornfield! It needs a right sharp oberseer t' look after dese yere niggers, tell ye it does, honey, dey am sech a triflin' sort. Mos' on 'em needs a right smart lashin' once a week, a sort o' sweet'ner f'r de odder time! See all dem pines whar I used t' work in de 'baccy? Ole Gilbert Peachy was de oberseer ober us in my time: he was a pow'ful strong nigger an' a heap wuss'n any white man t' drive us. We did heaps o' work in dem days, suah!"

"I don't like the red soil," mused Marian. "It suggests awesome things to me."

Jinsy went on talking of the old days and the vanished glories of the large estates, but Marian did not hear her; her thoughts were flying backward to the too recent years when the war brought inevitable partings and griefs, which shamed to silence if whispered to other than the birds fluttering in the free mountain air.

"Oh, my love! my lost!" this was the burden of her silent cry.

And she had gathered up the shattered remnants of her womanly hopes and brought them to this foreign land—the grave of her dearest—to help, as best she might, this new race of freemen. It was no idle fancy which had taken possession of her; she meant to devote the remainder of her life to this work, "to live and die among my chosen people," as she said.

"De red sile am de strongest lan', honey—brings de

bestest craps," Jinsy was saying. "Dat off yere am 'Stetten Woods.' 'Pears like ye better step over dar an' wait f'r Mr. Basto; seems 's if ye'd drap in de road. I knowed 'twas 'tirely too fur f'r sich as you!"

"It is not the distance so much, Aunt Jinsy. It is all so disconsolate!"

Jinsy set down her basket, ostensibly to rearrange her turban, but really to give her woolly head beneath it a thump with each massive fist, in order to introduce another "dictionary word" into those somewhat limited quarters. The spirit of freedom rose elate in Jinsy, and she meant to improve her privileges.

"Miss Mar'yon, I wish yer'd done tell me which am de highest conversation in de dictshun'ry—de bery highest?"

At sight of the anxiously expectant face, together with the extraordinary question, Miss Marian broke into a peal of hearty laughter.

"Dar now, I like t' hear dat yer!" and Jinsy joined in the laugh, while wondering what could "hab set de pore chile off so mighty sudden?"

"I guess I will go over there and rest. Are there many in the family?" asked Marian.

"Jess Miss Lucy an' her brother. See de fam'ly sem'nary ober yender? all de res' is dar, 'cept one dat done get killed in war-time, an' dey neber could fin'." Marian's face wore a strangely tender expression as she looked at the gleaming headstones in the distance. "Dey spec' de Yankees done hid his body, dey say. But de buzzards done fin' all dere hidin's!"

"Why, Jinsy, how absurd! I am a Yankee myself, you know."

"Yis, I know. An' yer looks jess like our white ladies. Dey tells us in war-time drefful stories 'bout

what de Yankees would do t' us, an' we jess dat silly we b'lieve our white folks. Hi! we done skeered mos' t' death when de Yankee sojers march by one day to de Five Forks, dat we hide, b't some didn't run, an' when de sojers saw dem pore creeturs dey jess emptied dere 'sacks o' all de eatins dey had. 'Here! take dis!' dey kep' a shoutin', an' off dey went so happy, a singin' 'Old John Brown.' Dunno who he be, suah; reckin some good man up Norf. Bless ye, honey! dey knowed dey wouldn't be 'lowed t' go hungry a minnit f'r dat yer, de Norf am so pow'ful rich, an' we uns so pow'ful pore!"

Miss Marian stole noiselessly up the sycamore avenue, ascended to the broad veranda, and let fall the ponderous brazen knocker on the door.

Aunt Jinsy watched her, then strode away as if wroth at somebody. "I'll hurry up dat miz'ble, no 'count, pryin' ole Simyun Basto! He'll hab ter come b'tween coughs, I reckon. Anyway, ef dey both be Yankees I c'n see dey's made ob diff'runt flesh ontirely. Don't b'lieve nuffin 'bout ole Basto! ain't no Yankee, suah!"

Presently a little black boy opened to Marian, and grinned delightedly. "May I come in?" she asked. "And will you—" But the little fellow had sped away for Mammy Rose, who hastened to the hall-way.

"Be you our teacher? bress de Lawd, chile, f'r ye! Dis is what I hab libed for!" devotedly exclaimed the aged woman. "Yer musn't stan' dere; come to de parlor!" She hovered over the girl, intent and eager to be of service. Then she silently fluttered away "to tell Miss Lucy."

Miss Lucy was in her own apartment, in bed. From the depths of an immense mound of feathers the voice sounded unreally faint and ghost-like.

"But you *mus'* see her!" persisted the privileged servant. "For de fam'ly's sake, dear! Your ma neber 'd let a lady wait alone in de parlor."

"Oh, that is nothing to the purpose. No Yankee woman ever came to wait in my ma's parlor, an' you know it, mammy! Besides, my poultice isn't ready t' come off f'r a full hour. How can you be so unreasonable, mammy? Do you want me t' be a fright to-night, at my own party? Such a delicate complexion as Sarah Old has got! and she poultices an hour every day. I'm glad you came, though; I want a fresh poultice made for my hands—this is dry as a brick! I don't see why my hands should tan so! I never go out without mittens. Well, mammy, get what you choose f'r your visitor downstairs—(she's *your* visitor really!)—do the honors, of course—cake and wine, or whiskey, if she prefers that. I should!"

"Miss Lucy!" interrupted the aged black dame; "I raised ye, chile. I'm as fond o' ye as I am o' my own flesh an' blood (fonder, I sometimes think), but ye make me 'shamed t' t'ink I know you, when you talk so, so—"

"So much fuss over a Yankee and a nigger teacher! What does she look like, anyway? has she horns? Come, mammy, an' fix my face anew, an' tie that knot tighter. I won't talk!"

Too indignant to trust herself to answer, mammy rearranged the several poultices and silently left the room, followed by a mocking laugh.

Outside, upon the landing, she relieved her mind. "Yis, ole mammy done know Miss Lucy speak de truf when she say she prefer de whiskey toddy. Ole mammy know how many times she put Miss Lucy ter bed case she 'too *poorly*' ter hol' up her head! an'

missy's ma she cry ober her an' say, 'Don' eber tell o' my pore chile, mammy!' an'I neber will; but she am de mos' agr'vatin' chile dat I eber raised, dat she am!"

She took cake and wine to the stranger, with this message: "Miss Lucy am poorly in bed, an' hopes yer'll 'scuse her, an' bids me serve ye wid de best in de house. Miss Lucy hab mighty poor spells mos'ly!—(Contrary ones!)" she muttered. ("I done hope de poultice'll dry so de freckles 'll show wuss'n eber!")

II.

SIMEON BARSTOW.

"WALL, yes, I told Malviny I ruther guessed you'd haul in by Saturday."

"But I wrote you a week ago what day I should be here," said Marian, coldly.

"Wall, it's quite a stretch to the deepo, as you've found out, I presume. I hain't been down latterly to see if there was any mail. Did you bring any along?"

She ignored his question. "Doesn't Mr. Jones pay you for coming for me?" she inquired. She had conceived an intense dislike to the insolent arrogance of the man.

"Oh, yes! he does. And I'll get precisely as much for coming this distance as if I went the whole figger, you see." His laugh was even more irritating than his speech. "I'm troubled with a cough; runs in the

Barstow family; all goes with c'nsumption. Had it f'r years 'fore I ever *thought* of movin' to ole Virginny. That's what made me pull up stakes and come. Folks said I wouldn't live till spring, and I up an' put. That was two year ago come March, and I'm alive an' kickin' yit."

Simeon was tall, attenuated, and he stooped. His hair was gray and stood out from his pinched features as if antagonistic in every point. His hooked nose stood over his thin lips like a vulture guarding its prey. His eyes were small and of a steely blue, and overhung by shaggy eyebrows. He was argumentative with every one except his wife, and he keenly relished a wordy combat. Malviny's was the superior force in the domestic world, and he was wise to recognize and yield it.

"Him done sot up ter be a power in de lan' !" "He sartain suah c'n talk !" "He t'ink he know heaps, but I donno, I donno !" These were the impressions of his unlettered colored brethren. As for the white men of the better class, socially they ignored him, and politically they laughed at him while seeking to use him. Their blunt directness of speech was no match for his taciturn shrewdness. He was unsparing of ironical reminiscence, and it seemed as if all he had ever read about Southern institutions and character had clung to his memory to be used now as occasion demanded. And, in turn, he solaced his solitude by ridiculing all the ways and customs of this Southern land; he was an alien even at his own fireside.

That "fireside" was an eighty-acre tract of the vast estate of "Fairy Wood," now broken into portions to suit settlers. A colony of Hollanders flourished in one corner, with a church of their own christened New Holland; but it could never have seemed to them in the

least like fatherland. Here and there were ten-acre farmsteads of negroes, who cultivated their own bits of property and pillaged from the large plantations enough to keep soul and body together until the next season's "craps."

The Barstow house had been hastily put together of unseasoned poplar—only upright boards without inside plaster or outside battens to render it comfortable. And the first summer's heat put spaces between them, through which one could peep, and through which the winter winds rushed, whistling with wild delight. As yet it was warm enough, for the sunny days lingered lovingly; and Mrs. "Malviny" had a liberal store of faded patchwork quilts, the relics of other days—now sadly reminiscent to all who would listen—with which she tapestried the one apartment when the need thereof came.

Miss Marian was to have the room overhead, reached by a ladder from the room below, and shared by the daughter of the house. There was no door to it, but domestic tapestry, in the shape of brilliant yellow sunflowers on a green groundwork, guarded the portal.

Step forth, Mrs. Malvina, as Miss Marian saw you on her arrival at your home! tall, bony, sinewy, straight, swift in her movements, with good-sized fists, which had a knack of unexpectedly doubling and being shaken to emphasize her statements; eyes of pale gray with an inquisitive gleam, and brows wearing an habitual frown. The mouth looked as if its missing teeth must have been lost in too eager combat. The thin lips were perpetually working, sucked into the toothless chasms, or pressing firmly together. A string of gold beads, much dented, her only splendor, never left her neck. Once a week she "yanked the frizzles," as she phrased it, out of her

yellowish-gray hair, which at all other times seemed altogether unruly. In a broken-nosed crock she saved the remnants of each day's tea-steeping to use as hair oil for this periodic toilet.

Mrs. Malvina would have vented her scorn in loud laughter at sight of finger-nails stained with henna; yet she accomplished a somewhat dissimilar effect by ornamenting her own nails with the dough adhering from vigorous moulding of wheaten loaves. They had a somewhat ghastly effect on strangers. Calicoes of the flowered patterns were her delight, and she boasted of an "alpacy" gown which had seen better days. Shoes she utterly abominated and entirely did without, except in the coldest winter days when she went forth to feed the cattle.

A born worker was Mrs. Malvina, doing both the indoor and out-door work without a thought of protest or remonstrance. Of "housen stuff" she had but little, but she made that little "do." And when all her indoor "chores" were over in the summer she "minded the cows," picked sumac to sell at the nearest "store," and dewberries to dry for winter use in the family, and attended to everybody's business far and near unless especially told to desist.

"The mortal suz! be you the boarder? Well, when I see the superintendent I'm a goin' t' have it out with him," shaking her fist, to Marian's utter dismay. "He said he'd engaged an old maid, older'n I was, t' rastle with these colored brains and try t' drive some sense through them! I told him I didn't allow no one t' be near me older'n I am, an' he laughed an' said 'I'd see.' Why, you ain't in your twentieth year, be you now?"

"Oh, yes," smiled Marian, "I am twenty-five."

"You don't look it then!" And with head a little

on one side, and hands resting on her hips, she deliberately surveyed the New England girl. "I guess, Sim Basto, that any one of the Virginny girls I've seen would gladly swop off with Miss Marun. Why, they're yeller as saffron or dusky as some o' their servants. An' they're forever a poulticin' with corn-meal to try an' look delicut! The mortal suz! if I hed a gal so rotten silly as that I'd pitch her up t' a barn-beam an' let her swing!"

Simeon smiled grimly, and deftly pushed a liberal portion of tobacco within one wrinkled cheek, the while he furtively eyed the newcomer. A pretty enough picture she made, looking around her with amused glances. The peach-blossom cheeks, full red lips, eyes of deepest blue, auburn curls, were a common enough sight among the Northern mountains.

"The mortal suz! Here, Stellur Jane, you fly round now, like a hen with her head cut off, an' set the table! I guess you must be consid'rable cravin', Marun! Hain't had nothin' sence ye set foot in this neighborhood, I bet! Git out the flowin' mul'b'ry dishes, sis, an' you may's well git out a table-cloth too! I don't gen'rally use 'em, f'r 't makes a sight o' washin'. I tell Sim a woman c'n pretty gen'rally find a plenty t' do most anywhere's she's dropped. Take her up 'n a b'loon an' drop her from the clouds an' she'll flax round the minute she touches the earth—but this *is* the beatingest place t' git fore-handed I ever did see! We come fr'm 'old Onta';' born an' brought up there, an' I love it! I love the very sand on the shore! I tell Sim I never will feel t' home in Virginny, never! I wouldn't live here all my days, not if they was t' give me the hull county! No, not if it was paved with greenbacks as thick as oak leaves!"

Miss Marian drew away a little from the accentuating fists. Mr. Barstow had a "coughing spell," which diverted his irrepressible better half.

"There, Sim! you opened your mouth, I bet, an' let the raw air in, coming home. Didn't he now, Marun? (I can't Miss ye! seems 's if I'd allers fellowshiped ye!) Sim *will* gab when he knows it's the death o' him!" Simeon smiled grimly, but made no reply.

"Stellur Jane's turned fifteen. She ain't brought up to do much; I let her putter round pretty much as she pleases. She's a dabster at piecin' quilts though! I do b'lieve she ruther do that than t' eat when hungry. I tell her it's better t' be ready an' not go, than t' go an' not be ready, an' so she's a saltin' down in the blue chist over there. She's got all the patterns we've ever heerd on 'cept one—the lone star of Texas—though what on earth one star can do on a bed quilt I can't imagine, can you?"

"No. Where is your daughter going, that she is making all these quilts?"

"Oh, the mortal suz! why, ready t' go off, t' be sure; t' get married, ye know!"

"There, Miss Stone," interposed Simeon from the rocking-chair (the only one, and sacred to Simeon's use), "if ye start Malviny off on that tack she won't think t' give ye any supper to-night. That's Malviny's weak p'int."

"An' what's yours, Sim Basto? I'm sure I can't pick out *one* when you've got nigh on to a hundred," retorted Malviny, who felt herself extinguished.

"I heard as how Percy Darnell was t' have a shuckin' t'-night; wants t' git his corn out the way 'fore Christmas; not a blamed nigger 'll do a stroke o' work Christmas week, f'r themselves nor nobody

else," remarked the host, as the silence grew too oppressive.

"Jinsy said she was goin' and Goodman too. Wall, up in old Onta' we do differently," remarked his wife.

"Did you ever live near Lake Ontario, Miss Stone?" asked Simeon.

"No, indeed! I belong to the Bay State!"

"Oh, yo're a Down-East Yankee, be ye?" laughed Mrs. Malvina. "Wall, y'll find it hard hoein' y'r row down here, I ruther fear. B't here's a cup o' old Bohee, an' we'll drink t' y'r good luck. I *will* have my cup o' tea, I tell Sim, if I go 'thout ev'rything else. Sim can set an' chaw t'bacco, an' I s'pose he gits some comfort from 't."

"I get comfort from reading, at all events," put in Simeon, "and I notice what looks like the New York *Tribune* sticking out of Miss Stone's satchel. I'm glad she takes it; it's so long since I have seen a copy I sha'n't know how t' act. An' I sha'n't stir till I've read it every word."

III.

SHUCKING CORN BY MOONLIGHT.

It was a merry scene on the old plantation. All the day the carts had been busy hauling the corn to the granary. At nightfall the workers gathered in twos and threes, singing as they trooped along, anticipating the night's revelry. Indoors Miss Lucy entertained a few

friends. The moon rose early and revealed a picturesque scene, and the work progressed bravely. Cesar Peachy led the singing :

"Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes one,
An' now my journey am jus' begun!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes two,
De Lord tole Moses what ter do!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes t'ree,
De Lord done set de pris'nor free!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes four,
De Lord done open heben's do'!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes five,
De Lord done turn de dead ter life!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes six,
Ole Pharo's army got 'n a fix!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes seben,
De Lord done ring de bells ob heben!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes eight,
De Lord done open heben's gate!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes nine,
De Lord done turn de water ter wine!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes ten,
Dan'll got 'n de lion's den!
Eighteen hunner an' anoder makes 'leben,
De Lord say de rachus 'll git t' heben!"

"An' dar's whar we'm boun' f'r t' go suah," declared Goodman Jones. "Dar now, you Pete, you done drink de whiskey all up—de hull gall'n! Sakes! what a mouth him hab f'r good whiskey!" And the fun grew loud and boisterous.

After midnight, when the corn was all housed safely, the banjo was tuned afresh, and the whole band of men and women formed a line, singing as they marched three times around the big pile of "shucks" whereon Jim, the banjo-player, was enthroned. Then he descended and took the lead to "the house," playing while the singers fairly shouted :

"Oh, it's down yere on de ole plantation,
A shuckin' ob de corn,
T' make de ash-cake 'long wid bac'n,
A fryin' in de morn!
De corn-pone! de blessed corn-pone!
Of all de breads de corn-bread
Am de sweetes' an' de bes'!
Of all de cakes de ash-cake
F'r certain am de bes'!"

Round the house three times, singing, while the revellers inside come out in merry groups to see them.

And then they gathered on the back veranda, where bread and meat and whiskey were served—too much of the latter—and where Mr. Percy Darnell and a few compatriots partook too freely, alas! of the latter refreshment, and grew hilarious with songs and dancing.

"We are the chivalry of the world!" loudly asserted the host, speaking rather thickly. "Don't all nations concede our claim? didn't the war prove it? It took—well how many years was it, Hector, for the Yanks to use us up?"

"Oh, hush up, now! you don't mean to go over all that ground again. Time's too precious! I say, Percy, old boy, pass along that demijohn; and sing, Cesar, sing!"

"Oh, I say! Cesar 'll be going t' school, now his teacher's arrived. I ought to have said 'skule,' I suppose, to speak properly;" and Percy grew very boisterous.

"Well now, Cesar, give us the multiplication table in rhyme. Sure enough! you ain't had time to learn it yet! that's what Yankee babies learn before they do their letters."

"Yes, mas'r," nodded Cesar, submissively. "Come, boys, I reckon it's time t' tote ourselves home," he added to the group of blacks, who rose at once.

"And suppose we interview the new arrival?" suggested Jim Dick Mason. "We should not neglect our duty to the stranger within our gates. Come, boys, trot out the horses! Christmas is coming with jolly good fun; let's begin it a few days beforehand."

So the horses came up, and the gay "chivalry" rode off mirthfully.

"I does hope," said Cesar soberly, as he trudged away, "dat dose no 'count rattle-brains won't go f'r t' skeer de blessed life outen our teacher!"

"An' she so gentle-like!" added Jinsy, wrathfully. "I c'd kill 'em ef dey does!"

"Oh, hush, now! dey don't mean t' go nigh her! dey jess talk dat foolish racket ter skeer us niggers, dey hate our school so!" and Goodman strode away.

Miss Marian was awakened from a dream of her native mountains by Mrs. Malvina's harsh tones:

"Mortal suz! how you do sleep, Marun! Hain't you heerd all this hollerin' an' singin' an' caterwaulin'—Sim calls it—outside? Well, you'll tide over when Gabriel's trump sounds, an' be the one passenger left behind."

Marian was awake now without doubt; she listened and heard her name called repeatedly. "Come! we merely wish to offer you, the nigger teacher, a moonlight serenade!"

In a few moments Miss Marian was dressed, and she cautiously descended the ladder.

"Mortal suz! you ain't goin' t' open the door? why they'll pile right in! I hain't no faith in seceshers anyway. Don't, Marun! Just tell me what t' say an' I'll scream it through the winder. I ain't 'fraid of a hull township of 'em! You mizrable mean seceshers, t' come disturbing folks at midnight! Ef any one on ye'll step

up here I'll show ye the stuff Northern women are made of !"

"Oh, please ! please, Mrs. Barstow !" entreated the gentle voice at the door, which opened ; she stood calmly surveying the group of young men.

"What do you wish ? I have come in answer to your call," she slowly said, and at the sound of her voice, low and sweet, one or two slunk away behind the house.

"We merely called to pay our respects, an' to see if you had horns," said one, with a loud laugh, looking around for the plaudits of his companions, and staring amazedly to find none. Every one had vanished, leaving him to do battle alone.

"You can take a good look at me," said Marian coolly—"at the stranger within thy gates. And I will now wish you good-night !"

And now Jinsy came rushing in with revengeful gleams in her black eyes.

"I declar', honey, if dey had done laid one little finger on ye, dar 'd been a fight suah !"

"I'll tell both of you fightin' women one thing," spake up the wise man Simeon from his bed in the corner : "one word from Miss Stone is more to the purpose than a pitched battle from both of you. As f'r Malviny, she's allers *too* ready—it spiles her quarrel b'forehand."

IV.

CHRISTMAS.

THE snow was softly falling and little brown birds fluttering through the laden tree boughs. Jinsy and her seven children rushed in with faces shining like Mrs. Barstow's stove in one corner.

"Chris'mas gif'! Chris'mas gif' to eb'ry one!" said all together, as is the invariable salutation on Christmas morning.

"The mortal suz!" Mrs. Barstow looked up from her kneading of bread. "I wish the hull keboodle on ye a merry Christmas, I'm sure; but you'll have that anyway."

"We'se boun' f'r t' hab a good time, suah. Dey has a supper at Crocker Rob'son's t'-night. Me an' Goodman are bid t' it. We has a fest'val at de church t'-morrer ebenin' t' help de church along. An' I done declar'! dar's more frolics goin' all de week dan we knows what t' do with." Jinsy's face wore its happiest smile.

"I don't make no account of Christmas more'n any other day," slowly observed Simeon between his coughing spells.

"'Deed you don't, den!" assented Aunt Jinsy, somewhat ironically. "Chris'mas comes b't once a year, an' I'm boun' f'r t' git a little good time den t' go roun' de res' ob de year."

"You don't make no 'count o' nothin', Sim Basto," observed his wife, giving her loaves a vigorous pricking, and shoving them into the waiting oven. "Well, Jinsy,

ye look so fine Goodman won't know ye !" as Marian pinned a scarlet bow to the neck of her gingham gown. Marian had something for each of the children too, including the baby ; they shyly grinned and murmured " Ta, ta !" the Virginia form of " Thank you !"

" And what a nice baby it is !" said Marian.

" So it is," swiftly put in Mrs. Barstow. " But it's name's enough t' kill it. Such a cat name ! I don't pretend t' pronounce it all the same week."

In answer to Marian's look of inquiry, Jinsy said, " Her name's M'ria Ann Radikash Kitty Cuttydash, but we calls her jess M'ria."

" And here's a parcel for little Jimmy, and I'm coming to sit with him this evening while you are gone," said Marian.

" Oh, Miss Maryon, if you only would ! Him can't talk much, he bery weak, b't he'll love t' lie an' look at ye !"

" He fails !" swiftly pronounced Mrs. Malviny, as she flew about the room, " doing up the work." " I c'n see that he does, every day."

" I dunno's he does git any better, Miss Mar'yon, I dunno's he's any wuss. Him's de curiouses' sick I eber did see. 'Pears like nothin' do him no good nohow. De whole lan's been t' see him, an' I've tried all de yarbs I c'n hear of. Dinah Peachy says he's cunj'rd ! an' I knowed it long 'nough 'fore she did."

" Why, what do you mean ? There's no such thing !" Marian's blue eyes open wide.

" Oh, yis he be, Miss Mar'yon ! he not common sick, he done waste away so. I done know who did it too. Sally Jonson, she been done sot agin me f'r a long spell. She's a rapid sort o' woman an' dare do any thin'. B't me an' she'll square off evin yit."

"But what did she *do*?" persisted Marian.

"Oh, eb'ry one knows she am a witch. She b'witched Sam Burrel's wife, an' she died in awful miz'ry. 'Twas eight year ago, an' her fun'ral sermon ain't preached yit. I dunno 's 't eber will be."

"Sally's at her old tricks, is she?" inquired Simeon.

"Dat de truf! B't I'll b' even wid her yit if Jimmy done die!"

"Are you a witch also?" solemnly inquired Marian.

"Bless you, honey! I declar'!" Aunt Jinsy burst into a laugh. "Eb'rybody ain't gifted dat ar' way 'zackly. She's a sinner-woman, an' I done b'long to de church. I come through years ago. I don't hol' t' no sech sinful doin's as dem; b't dere am sech t'ings f'r certain suah!"

"Stick to it, Jinsy," drawled Simeon ironically, "and you'll live the longer. But *that* ain't what ails Jimmy."

"What den?" Jinsy flashed like a flame. "Ef ye knows why don't ye tell what'll help him? He am a pore, miz'ble boy. What I knows an' hab seen dat I hol' to!"

"The mortal suz! my bread's risin' like all possessed! Mebbe it's a ketchin' complaint," says Mrs. Barstow.

"When Betsy Burrel was tooken she turned all white an' as wrinkly as a dried 'simmon. Dem ain't all de signs neither. I knows a heap more 'n I tell!"

"That's more than I c'n say!" briskly put in Mrs. Barstow. "Sim, where's sis gone? I want her t' watch the bread bake while I feed the calves."

She went to the door and shouted, "Stellur! Stellur Jane Basto! come right in! I want ye. I'm goin' t' make some dried-apple fritters f'r dinner, an' you must flax roun' an' give me a lift. Take holt now as if you

meant it! Walk right up like a chicken to a dough-dish!"

"Up in York State they used to call our daughter Estella downright lazy," quoth Simeon, eying his busy wife with a comical grimace.

"I don't care a copper what they said; I'll stick t' old Onta'! O the beautifullest place! I loved to walk in the sand, it felt so warm t' my feet! I know I 'umor Stellur too much, Marun! I never had no luck raisin' girls; we lost four, an' sis is my last one, an' I mean t' 'umor her as much an' no more'n I please."

"Suit yourself, Malviny, and you'll suit me," grimly responded Simeon.

"Well, my boys are likely chaps as ever trod shoe-leather; they're settled up there roun' the old lake. Dreadful opposed t' our movin' they was, wa'n't they, Sim? But Sim says, what's the use o' dyin' here, when I c'n live som'ers else? Lake winds are dreadful tryin', 'specially in spring. I allers noticed that if any of the Basto folks pulled through May they worried through the rest of the year well enough.

"Sech a time as we had a movin'! We had a good team t' start with, an' we thought 'twould be cheaper t' drive down an' take our chances on the way, so we stowed away a good many little notions under the seat, an' put bedding in. Ye see the way we managed was this: we put up f'r the nights at some farm or other, an' as they was most gen'rally log housen, there wa'n't b't two rooms, one above an' one b'low, an' we stowed ourselves in some corner. The mortal suz! of all the poor livin' I ever see in my born days I saw the most then. The women didn't seem t' know how t' do. There!" she suddenly broke off the recital with a laugh. "I gen'rally c'ntrived t' look t' my own bread an' butter.

Sometimes I buttered it on both sides. In one place I went up stairs t' sleep an' the woman give me this t' go t' bed with." She held up a tiny iron candlestick. "An' nex' mornin' I tucked it inter my wagon traps. It's come mortal handy too, I tell ye!"

"There, Miss Stone, Malviny's told ye the worst side of her. She don't believe in seemin' better than she is; she goes the other way. Her chief weakness though is in her fighting propensities. She itches t' lick ev'ry man she meets," and Simeon laughed sharply.

"You shut up, Sim Basto! I ain't 'fraid o' you nor any other man; wa'n't a man in old Onta' I couldn't make walk Spanish. Fact is, I never have put forth my full strength yit. Didn't I manage old sozzle-head Peters, though?" she chuckled. "'Look here, Dave Peters,' I said, 'I'll shake ye in two if y' don't stop puttin' on me;' an' I up an' did it, too, till he hollered like a dog. An' that's the way t' serve 'em, Marun!" The fists doubled and shook, to the impending ruin of the fritters fizzling in the hot fat.

"There's Jinsy now! she's a spitfire too," drawled Simeon, who had long been hoping for the diversion of a pitched battle between the women.

"Oh, I ain't 'fraid o' nobody. An' I minds my own business!" promptly retorted Jinsy, furtively eying her own huge hands.

Such a pitiful little brown face, with eyes of a softer color than his skin! so wasted and hopeless and helpless he looked to the gentle teacher that night! His bed was but "a pallet" of straw and rags, with a ragged fragment of quilt for covering, laid on the damp earth floor. The other children squatted before the big fireplace.

"Oh, how pleasant and cheery this fire is!" cried

Marian, as the flames leaped and the sparks flew in showers up the chimney. "I so love an open fire! I wish Mrs. Barstow had a fireplace!"

"I done d'spise dat ar ole stove-pipe a stickin' outen de ruff," quoth Nancy, the eldest girl. "A sort o' make-b'lieve chimly!"

It seemed to Marian, as she sat by the fire and told the children stories, and sang to them a Christmas carol, that she had never been so happy in all her life.

What a revelation of beauty she was to those simple black children! never had a voice sounded so like music to them, except, perhaps, in their dreams. And the vision of suffering on the rude pallet was only a source of peace to her; she felt sure that the suffering was even now past; she felt sure that little Jimmy was nearer home than his mother supposed.

"Better so," thought Marian. "The waiting angels will gather him lovingly in their arms and bear him unto the green pastures."

His eyes never left Miss Marian. Large and solemn, they seemed to her excited fancy to be already looking upon the eternal verities.

She spoke to him from time to time, looked at him chiefly when telling her stories; the children laughed, but Jimmy's face remained immovable.

She offered him food; he shook his head. She had made lemonade for the children, and she held the cup to his lips, but he motioned it away. Even the sudden reports of the "pop-crackers," with which the little blacks always celebrate the holidays, failed to arouse an interest.

"What do you like best, Jimmy?" she whispered, stooping to catch his faint reply, "To hear ye sing."

And then she sang all the songs and hymns she knew, holding his wasted fingers in her soft palms. Jimmy's

face grew radiant with pleasure—softer gleams played in the liquid depths of those wonderful eyes.

"Oh!" sobbed Jinsy, stealing swiftly in at midnight. "I done been out door dis long time, Goodman an' me has! we done 'fraid ter come in bold like, it all seemed so r'ligious. An' all of a suddin I was tooken wid a creepin' ober me, dat mabbe my Jimmy boy was done gone home. Dat's what made me cry. I'se mighty sorry dat I 'sturbed de meetin'!"

"It is time it was broken up," smiled Marian. "Here is little Kitty Cuttydash, went to sleep long ago! I am coming every day while Christmas lasts to sing to you, little Jimmy!"

He made a motion to speak, and she put her ears close to his lips. "I done hope it 'll las' f'reber!" he whispered, smiling.

The Christmas days wore away amid feasting and visiting and mirthfulness on every side. But as the last hours sped and the old year was merged in the new, little Jimmy went home.

V.

JOHN LADY.

"THE mortal suz! Marun, Marun! do come t' the door an' feast your lonesome eyes on this comin' caravan. It's wuth a journey t' Virginny t' see. There now! ye won't see sech a crittur as that 'f you s'arch all Massachusetts, an' that's gospel truth! As f'r sis, she boohoo'd right out an' run!"

Marian's solemn face lightened with a smile as the fantastic figure approached, seated on a mule which rejoiced in the well-earned name of "Stubborn Jack." And this was the manner of his progress:

A few paces of sedate slowness, then a sudden halt of the fore feet and an elevation of the hind feet which caused his rider to execute a series of movements resembling repeated bowings. Some curious object depended from one hand, which spun around as if seeking to escape from the detaining fingers. Then a sudden onward progress and another arrest.

"The mortal suz! be you a man or be you a woman?" shouted Mrs. Barstow as the figure came within hailing distance. There was no response, but the figure blithely dismounted, leading Stubborn Jack to a willow-oak tree and securely tying him. He then made his way back to the doorway.

"Why, it's John Lady! Ask him in, Malviny, t' git warm!" Simeon looked briefly up from the columns of the *Tribune* with a nod. "*I'll* answer your question, Malviny. He's a young man, one of the old Steften Wood slaves."

"An' my name's John Tomson. I cook fer Missy Lucy. She done send dis yer ober f'r yer t' buy, as she hedn't no use f'r it, 'n she t'ought 's how bein' Norf'n folks y'd like f'r t' hab a turk'y f'r dinner; mighty fine gobbler him be, suah!"

"What made ye wring its neck 'fore ye brought it?" abruptly questioned Mrs. Barstow. "I likes t' buy live things *if* I buy 'em," she sententiously added.

John appeared embarrassed at her directness; he giggled, holding one hand to his mouth to hide its enormous cavern; "for all the world like a woman," declared Mrs. Barstow in an audible aside to Marian.

He was truly a picturesque figure, and justified the Yankee girl's stare. He wore trousers of gray home-spun, with low, laced women's shoes. A woman's basque of dark "Virginny cloth," pointed in the back and trimmed with a ruffle of the same, adorned the upper part of his person, being padded liberally about the shoulders to add fulness to his lean contour; his neck was finished by a wide white collar and a ribbon bow; a similar bow with longer ends was pinned to the middle of his basque behind. Gilt ear-rings dangled with every movement of his head, and an immense "waterfall," surmounted by a net, topped by a prodigious bow, was his striking coiffure. All around his low and narrow forehead the woolly frizzles hung, in the most engaging form of "bangs" imaginable. An ordinary man's hat of black felt completed his costume, if we except a large red cotton kerchief peeping from one trouser-pocket.

On Sundays in summer, when John went to church, he was provided with the additional articles of a flowered cambric parasol and a "shut-up fan," which latter article he used assiduously.

A few idiosyncrasies of John Lady, as he was universally called, may be briefly stated. In his childhood John was happy only with his dolls, of which he had legion. The greater part were merely corn-cobs dressed in what gaudy rags he could beg of all the cabins in "the quarters." All the hours the child could secure from the numberless errands his mammy invented to keep him busy were given to his pathetic row of babies, safely stowed away in an old feeding-trough. It mattered not that the other little "darkies" ridiculed his display of maternal solicitude: "Go 'long wid ye! I heap rudder play wid de geurls! I'se boun' f'r t' take keer my fam'ly! Boys am no 'count no how!"

And when old enough to help mammy in the making of his clothing he was decisive about their fashion, combining both masculine and feminine articles of attire to his own entire satisfaction.

"Had any distemper 'mong your fowls over there?" abruptly inquired Mrs. Malviny, as she deliberately washed some white yams for roasting.

"Oh, yes, ma'am! a heap of 't! Miss Lucy done los' mos' all her chick'ns. Dis yer ole feller was a pimp'n roun' all las' week; him was de las' one Miss Lucy hab, an' sh' done hate f'r t' see him waste 'way, so dat she tell me t' tote him off'n de plantation. She reckin sh' wou' lost him ontirely like de res'."

"Your Miss Lucy's *too* cute! it's jest that 'bout her that's apt t' spile, even if 'tis cold weather," sententiously observed Mrs. Barstow, as she arranged her potatoes in even rows in the oven. "And what did she 'spect t' git f'r this old Methuselah? Turkey f'r dinner? the mortal suz! I don't want t' eat Noah's ark though! Do ye think I'm a buzzard? does Miss Lucy think so?" shaking her fists so closely before John's astonished face that he jumped in terror for his hat to effect an escape.

She followed him closely. Thinking to propitiate the household deity, John spluttered forth: "I done tole missy dat it am a sin t' sell what she wouldn't go f'r t' eat herself; but missy feel so pow'ful pore dese yer days she am 'bleeged f'r t' do de bes' she kin. She say dat Norf'n folks wa'n't so pow'ful p'tic'lar 'bout dar eatins, an' ef ye didn't *know* dat it died o' 'stemper, why she reck'n'd 'twouldn't hurt ye. She 'spect dat de flesh taste jess as good. I dunno! I do jess as young missy say."

"Wuss an' wuss!" roared the now thoroughly irate

woman. "It died, did it? Poor thing! I can find it in me t' feel compassion f'r some creeturs, b't your missy, as you call her, isn't one of 'em! Poor, is she? she hain't *half* poor 'nough yit t' make her decent. Tell her so! Poverty would make a hog gentle; *she* ain't poor. Tell her Northern folks don't eat carrun! Tell her she ain't cut her eye-teeth yit, f'r all she thinks herself so smart! Tell her smartweed tea is a dreadful stim'lant t' the intellect! Tell her Malviny Basto c'n tell her more in six minutes than she ever heard afore in all her life! Tell her—"

But John Lady had fairly got away from her, and as she shouted from the doorway he was swiftly untying his risky steed.

"Look a-here, you manakin, you've got t' tell me what y' want f'r your deceased old flamingo, there! Come! mabbe I'll buy it after all, jess to 'commodate. Sim Basto, git out your pocketbook! I do love t' 'commodate these Southern people! Beats all how much I think o' them! I hain't f'rgot the fust year I came here. I didn't know 's much then 's I do now, an' your Miss Lucy sent word she'd sell me some lard. Wall, I wanted some an' I let Jinsy go over t' git it. She took the money t' pay f'r 't too, Northern style. Miss Lucy couldn't make change, she sent word, b't she'd send me some eggs f'r change that week. An' I waited an' waited, an' six weeks went roun' an' no sign of an egg nor nothin'. An' I told Sim I wouldn't put up with 't nohow, so I up an' went mysilf t' see how 't was.

"The mortal suz! 'Why, I sent you some turnip-seed f'r change, Mis' Basto; I thought you'd want t' plant an' raise turnips, o' course!' I declar' for 't, I was so beat I come away without sayin' anythin'. Such managin' as that I never see afore in all my born days!"

"Tell him you didn't get the turnip-seed after all. Do, Malviny!" Simeon put in slyly.

"Oh, yis, Sim Basto, you an' Marun there c'n set an' laugh an' see y'r wife put upon! But there'll come a day o' reckonin'! put that in your pipe an' smoke it!

"Oh, wait a minnit!" she called after John Lady, who was vainly endeavoring to urge Stubborn Jack along. "How much, now, 'll you take f'r your dried specimen—the lowest price, ye know?"

"Missy said as how I'se t' ask a dollar 'n a ha'f at fust, an' then, if you wouldn't give dat, drap t' a dollar 'n a quarter."

"Glad I found out. I shouldn't a slep' a wink t'-night if I hadn't!" Malviny shut the door with a bang that made Stubborn Jack respond with ludicrous eagerness to his rider's vigorous "Git up now, you mule! git up strong! you Jack!"

Marian, peeping laughingly from the window, saw the bow-ends streaming from the basque, and heard the fainter "Git up, now, you mule!" as both figures vanished in the forest.

VI.

MRS. BARSTOW'S SPIRITUAL ADVISER.

But while the teacher's eyes were straining for the last glimpse of John Lady she made a discovery of another impending visit.

"Why, Mrs. Barstow, this is a day of masquerading, I

believe; here surely comes Dom Pedro, or some other worthy Spanish knight."

"Le' me git my spec's on! I c'n pick out a flea on a yeller dog then! Oh, yis! h' hum! Sim! Sim! I do hope you'll manage t' let that newspaper alone while the parson stays. I wonder what started *him* up t' come! Fact is, I've been here s' long I'd quite gi'n up his ever comin'! An' here all of a sudd'n he jumps on us with a past'ral call!"

"Better late than never!" smiled Marian.

"I don't know 'bout that. I'd jest as lieves, now, he wouldn't a come. I'm a church-member up in old Onta', in good an' reg'lar standin' too; b't I've never took no letter t' jine here, f'r it seems t' me the churches here are as cur'us as the rest of the folks; don't none on 'em seem t' care an old copper 'bout Northern folks, no way. I've noticed one thing though, Marun—an' you'll see it too 'f you live 's long 's I have—they'll rake the last cent out o' ye 'f ye once give 'em a foothold! I've been t' church c'nsid'rable here. I was always used t' goin' t' hum, and I ain't quite broke myself yit of the habit; 'spect I shall, though, if I live here all my days, f'r I must say I don't fellership all their ways. They're not our folks' ways, not by a long shot!

"There's Sim, now! he takes religion dreadful easy, as he does ev'rythin' else. The Basto's all do. Not one on 'em ever got converted, as ever I heerd on!"

"Wall, Malviny, they've done some other foolish things—plenty of 'em, in fact!" drawled Simeon, with an ironical smile. "Malviny's folks now are right the other way. They're all pious (real shouting Methodists), and they never do nothin' else that's foolish."

"Yis, Sim Basto, I'm r'ligious, I hope! I've g'in up

expectin' grace 'll ever reach your heart. I'm r'ligious, Marun, b't 'tain't struck in t' hurt none !" She finished with a profound sigh.

Mrs. Barstow had a habit of sighing without any apparent cause. She sighed while peeling the potatoes for dinner ; while stirring and beating up her feather bed ("laying it" was her expressive phrase) ; while listening to the teakettle's preparatory supper-song ; while setting the sponge at evening for the morrow's bread ; and after all her reminiscent relations the sighs were frequent and of various depths—a sort of melancholy refrain of her energetic days.

"That, Miss Stone, is the Rev. Clayton Armstead ! Malviny never will get t' tell you his name," quietly interrupted Simeon. "He's a rigid Presbyterian !" as a tall, lank figure, sitting soldierly erect, and wearing a military-looking cloak, his legs protected from muddy splashes by leathern leggings buttoned above the knees, and wearing cruel-looking spurs, rode up to the door-step.

"Oho-ah ! Oho-ah !" he shouted.

"That's the Virginny bugle-call !" sighed Mrs. Barstow, as she "slicked up" the room preparatory to granting entrance.

"Yes, Miss Stone, it's the true Southern style of calling on your acquaintance. One would suppose that the 'quality folks,' as Jinsy styles them, would naturally exhibit different manners from the low-downers," began Simeon.

"O-ah-h, Mr. Barstow !" came again, in a resounding whoop.

"B't I don't see a mite o' difference," swiftly interjected Malviny ; "an' I've watched for 't c'nsid'rable spry. I mos'ly let 'em holler, an' take it out in

hollerin' ! As f'r sis, ye can't git her t' lift the latch f'r one of 'em. B't, seein' it's the parson, I'll strain a p'int !" She flung open the door.

"I began to fear you were all away from home, madam," said the visitor in his most stately tones.

"Do tell 'f ye did ! Wall, hitch yer hoss t' the willer-oak yonder, an' come right in ! might 's well have done it at first. Wait ! I c'n do it for ye. Mr. Basto is ruther weakly, an' he don't flax roun' in the cold more'n he c'n help."

The minister stared, but declined her proffered help, and fastened his steed as directed. He then followed her into the house.

Mrs. Barstow entered at once upon her preparations for dinner, pausing occasionally to fling a remark into the midst of the quiet conversation across the room ; her remarks were usually of the bombshell order, causing laughter or astonishment or dread, and sometimes the three commingled.

"Oh, yes," Mr. Armstead was saying, half-regretfully, to his host, who had become more animated than Marian had before seen him ; "it *is* the prettiest flag in the world ! I can admit that now, though it's not so many years ago since I was fighting against it with all my might."

"All your puny might !" asserted his hostess, snapping to the oven-door. "Wall, it relieved your feelin's some, I s'pose, an' it didn't hurt Uncle Sam a grain."

Mr. Armstead flushed. "I don't know about that, madam. I think we did kill off a heap—a right smart heap of Uncle Sam's men !" then followed a string of illustrations from various battle-fields.

"In these days it should be matter of regret rather than of pride, I think," softly mused Marian.

"As to that, madam, I am sure I speak for the whole South when I speak for myself (we are identical), we regret nothing. Were it to do over again I should do exactly as I did before. Not that we expect ever to take up arms again: we gave up in good faith and mean to abide by the result. But, madam, I regret nothing. I am proud, and more than proud of our martial achievements!"

"'Pride goeth b'fore a fall!'" sighed Mrs. Barstow.

"Then you don't believe in moral progression?" asked Simeon.

"When one's cause is absolutely right, progression is not possible, sir! Our cause did not succeed, it is true, but it was only because our strength was not equal to our ambition; it was a mighty big thing we attempted, sir, this Southern kentry! I am a South C'rlinyan and Southern to the backbone." He tucked a huge tobacco quid into one lean cheek—as sallow as the juice he so generously bestowed on Mrs. Barstow's clean floor—and shut his bloodless lips together with a defiant snap.

"Our neighbor over toward the court-house—the one who sold me this land—used t' git monstrous huffy whenever the war was alluded to," and Simeon smiled slyly as he addressed his remark to Marian. "He said he wished that South Carliny and Massachusetts had a been sunk in the sea ages ago, an' then there never 'd a-been no war. Well, here are two very able representatives from those States; I wonder how Mr. Jefferson's plan would suit you two?"

"It would suit *me* well enough, if Massachusetts had gone first," loudly laughed the "backbone" minister. "She always was a pestilent State."

"Thank you, sir!" coldly rejoined Miss Marian,

while Simeon rubbed his hand gleefully under cover of Miss Marian's newspaper at the impending conflict.

The sloe-black eyes of the Carolinian slowly fastened on the large blue orbs of the Yankee school-teacher, and there they rested in a prolonged stare. She did not flinch from it. Even the dull perceptions of Simeon Barstow were roused to an unwonted glow of admiration for the noble and beautiful and indignant face calmly returning the apostolic gentleman's stare.

Mrs. Malvina deftly averted the crisis: "Set up! set up, friends! I've always noticed one thing, folks ain't apt t' quarrel on a full stomach. Stellur Jane, you whet up that carvin' knife an' cut up the spar'-rib! Sis is a master-hand at carvin'. There's only one dish she won't have noth'n t' do with, and that's chit'lins. Heard s' much 'bout their bein' good, thinks me I'll try my hand at 'em, an' lo! an' behold! not a mortal soul would touch it. B't Jinsy thought 'twas a great godsend."

"Chitterlings is a mighty good dish! a mighty good dish!" emphatically pronounced the guest. "When properly prepared," he added.

"The mortal suz! I *thought* I knew how t' cook properly. B't p'raps I c'nsate too much," began the offended hostess, but, happening to catch the twinkle in Simeon's eyes, she further refrained; she was not going to advance his malicious pleasures.

"I should like to know about this wonderful dish. I never before heard of it," said Marian.

"It's hog's insides, that's all; b'iled soft and salvy," spake up quiet Stella Jane.

"I've heard that the Northern people were somewhat peculiar about their eating," slowly rejoined Mr. Armstead.

"Well, yes; they don't seem t' take no great t' hog

an' hominy, if they c'n git anythin' else ! I dunno but what they *be* p'culiar, viewed from Southern lights," soberly replied Mrs. Barstow, passing around generous sections of deliciously fragrant mince-pie.

"The pudding is very nice !" commented the minister. "This is an unknown dish here. I wish it were not," he laughed, and this appreciation of her culinary efforts completely restored the hostess's good humor.

While dinner was thus harmoniously progressing Jinsy entered bearing a letter to Marian, who welcomed the interruption as affording her a means of escape. Throwing on her warm shawl, she paced slowly to the schoolhouse, Jinsy following and earnestly talking :

"I didn't mean t' giv' it ter ye 'fore 'em," she explained. "I know Mis' Basto won't giv' ye no peace till she finds out who sent it an' what's in it. Y' can't stan' out agin' her. I tell you, Miss Maryon, I never seed sech a change in nobody as in Mr. Percy. He looked so 'umble-like he'd creep 'n de dust 'fore ye 'f ye'd let him. I done suah he am pow'ful sorry he done dat. He *am* a gen'leman, Miss Maryon !"

Marian smiled into the earnest face. "But I don't wish any one to creep in the dust, my good Jinsy. I have nothing laid up against him ; tell him so from me. I can send him no other answer. Be sure to tell him so.

"It seems to me this is a day of surprises," she finished, as if talking to herself.

As she went along she could hear Mrs. Barstow calling after her from the doorway :

"Marun ! Marun ! the minister 's goin' t' have fam'ly worship ! Come back ! 't won't take long !" But Marian gave no sign of hearing or heeding.

At which Aunt Jinsy chuckled, watching her open

the school-house door. "Dat ar gal am got roots in her f'r sartain suah! Don' b'lieve she done keer one straw whether Mis' Basto done pleased or not! Here she hab got a lob-letter from Mas'r Percy, an' o' coorse she done want ter read it ag'in. She am one ob Jinsy's sort, she *am!*"

"I should like to borrow these newspapers to read, if you have no objection," said the minister, as he extended his hand to Simeon for a final "good day!" "It is seldom I see a Northern newspaper."

"Only two objections," dryly responded the host. "One is they belong t' Miss Stone, and the other is that they are of infidel tendencies, and will therefore do you great harm."

"Sim! Sim Basto!" Mrs. Malviny's voice had a warning ring to it.

The minister laughed. "I'll take both risks cheerfully!" And reaching out his long arm he gathered the papers and pocketed them.

As he trotted along the forest roads, he also mused concerning Marian:

"That Yankee woman possesses unusual force of character. I should be half afraid of her were I to see much of her; but, thank Heaven, there is no likelihood of this. . . . I must drop in to take supper with Miss Darnell. Ah, *there* is a true woman! the purely Southern type! What delicacy of manner and looks! what subdued fervor in her dark eyes! what romantic pallor overspreads her historic face! like—like— Well, here I am!"

That evening his talk still ran concerning the Yankee girl, but now he had two eager listeners.

"I would help the Yankees, I *think*," quoth Miss Lucy gayly; "if they were like to starve or suffer

greatly in any way, I mean. I hope I'm Christian enough to do that. I'd help bury them if they died. But I confess that's all the intercourse I want with them."

Percy made no rejoinder.

"That's so!" heartily assented the Rev. Clayton Armstead, "the backbone" Southerner. "I agree with you, Miss Lucy—I think the Yankees are perfectly horrid! !"

VII.

CESAR'S CABIN.

CESAR PEACHY was pulling the blades and cutting the tops from the ripening corn. The August sun was drying the greenness and killing all vegetable life; and it was hard also on the human toilers in the field. His black face, seamed and wrinkled with the burden of ninety years, glistened in the sunshine. But life did not appear to be a burden to Uncle Cesar; if he was proud of any earthly thing it was of his many years.

"I'm mos' a hundred, ole Mas'r be praised! He done been berry good to me sence I come t'rough; an' I'm a ripenin' f'r His kingdom.

"'Oh, yes, my Lord, my father ought to be dar,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!
A sittin' in de kingdom f'r to hear when Jurdan roll,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!
Oh, yes, my Lord, my mother ought to be dar,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!
A lis'nin' for my chariot wheels,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!'"

Tall and lean and bent in figure, clad in ragged homespun, happy and merry, always singing, and always trusting to a higher power—called tenderly and familiarly (like a daily living presence) "Old Master"—the many mysteries his simple mind could not understand.

"Sho! dis yer am pow'ful hot; 'pears like de sun am fire hisself a rainin' down on us pore folks."

Cesar paused in his work a moment and glanced upward half-fearfully. Then his song and his labor began afresh:

"'I want to go to heben when I die,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!
If ye' can't cross Jurdan ye can't go roun',
Roll, Jurdan, roll!
Sinner-folks 'll be swallowed up,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!
I done got home, my Lord!
Roll, Jurdan, roll!'"

An under-current of pondering over various worldly matters while his spiritual aspirations flowed mechanically from his lips, presently broke in disjointed mutterings:

"Dat am de curiousest t'ing in dis world! What ole Mas'r mean when Him say, 'De pore ye'll allers hab, but I'm done gone away!' Reckon he couldn't stan' it no longer on dis yarth:

"'Oh, yes, my Lord, my sister ought ter be dar,
F'r t' hear when Jurdan roll!
My brudder ought ter be dar—
Yes, my Lord! t' hear thy chariot wheels,
Roll, Jurdan, roll!'

Hi! de sun moughtn't be an hour high. Dis niggar got t' pull dis yer row 'fore sunset suah. What fur de

rain don't come and fill out dese nubbins? de drouth burn de sap out'n 'um. Mighty pore craps we make dis year suah; mighty pore 'baccy crap, pore corn crap. I respect ole Mas'r knows best; if we observe de rain an' de shine He'll send de weather f'r our craps. De t'ing we got to do is to 'serve our blessin's an' not trouble 'bout de rest. Dis is toler'ble good blade fodder, better 'n I observe suah."

His row finished, Cesar mopped his brow and picked up his staff, visions of a tidy cabin with hot pones awaiting him, and Dinah smiling a welcome from the doorstep brightening his way thither.

"Dar now! I done miss dat hare, 'mos' hit 'em dough! Reckon Dinah 'd grin how'dy f'r a hare f'r supper! Dar gwine t' be a pow'ful sight o' ague dis fall, allers so arter such hot, dry summer as dis yer." Uncle Cesar shivered in anticipatory conflicts with his especial foe. "Seems like I'd shake my pore ole bones clean outen der flesh sometimes. But den if I does I'll get to de kingdom all de sooner. Ole Mas'r knows best, dat He do!"

The smell of frying bacon came forth to make Cesar hungry. It was a comfortable home. A cow looked round at the sound of his staff on the hard sand, cleanly swept, and two dogs bounded to greet him; some guinea fowl strutted and sounded discordant cries; a number of other poultry were going to roost in the tree-tops and lower branches of the nearest trees.

"Here, you Folly! you Tige! git out dat skillet! wish you done burn your paw to last foreber! a nosin' roun' so aggravatin' like," exclaimed Dinah, raising her head from a bag in one corner wherein the precious wheaten flour was kept for special occasions, her ebony arms powdered white.

"Why, Dinah! hab we any kin come?" asked Cesar in some surprise. "I sees ye making up some Christ-dust f'r supper!"

(This is the common name for flour, signifying its rarity in the daily fare; it graces the Sunday breakfast, but "John Constant" or corn-meal is the usual week-day "staff of life.")

"Yes, dat you do, ole man! I t'ought it would be a great condition to our supper; you've been tol'ble spry at work all day, an' I had a right smart chance o' washin'; wuss part is de totin' it to de house, but Miss Otely got no boy to send f't."

The cabin rejoiced in a floor. Dinah could not abide an earth floor, "'count my rheumatiz," and there was a small square, called a window, in one side, with a wooden shutter which swung on leathern hinges. The door with its latchet was closed only at night—summer or winter, it stood always open. A narrow high bedstead in one corner rejoiced in a feather bed made up high and round, with a bright patch-work quilt atop. This was Aunt Dinah's glory and pride. The cabin was whitewashed inside and outside, and it boasted of a rocking-chair; and a comfortable-looking and comely woman was the ruler of this humble sphere. Of ample proportions, good-natured, and energetic beyond all reasonable requirements, a famous cook in the old slavery days, Aunt Dinah's chief delight now was in retrospection of those departed glories and grandeurs. "'Sides, I want'er take a bit to Mis' Crittenden in de mornin'. Her appetite's pow'ful pore! but den dey jess got nuffin to eat; dat's de truf."

"Is she any better?" mechanically asked Cesar.

"I reckon she's tireder dan eber to-day—an' she's been tired as could be eber sence I knowed her. I misjudge

she'll be sent for 'fore many days, Cesar. How 'd I know? Oh, I can't tell, but it's in de air—so mystiss like"—with a solemn shake of her woolly head. "Now, dar's Ry'lene—puff!" (she blew an imaginary feather in the air) "she's jess *that*. How white folks live widout *no* t'ings to eat, *no* clo's t' wear?"

"You think black folks c'n stan' it!" laughed Cesar. "But I dunno's white folks feelin's is bery diff'runt. T' be sure clo's is a great condition t' good livin', an' other t'ings too—'sides the Crittendens is pore low down trash anyway; dey don't feel t'ings like quality folks."

"Dat dey don't!" vigorously assented Dinah, pounding her biscuits with hearty good-will. "Miss Otely, now, or Miss Betty! de pore chillern couldn't live so; dey was raised so diff'runt. Dey t'ink dey see hard times — sure 'nough 'tisn't de ole times when Mas'r Peyton and Mistiss Car'line was alive. Cesar, ole man," with a solemn nod, "dem Crittendens hab been 'thout meal f'r days, Ry'lene told me."

"I don't see how dey could live 'thout John Constant," cried Cesar, startled.

"Why de dog cotched a hare now an' den, an' dey got a few cymlins t' cook, an' most days dey c'd lay hold on a few turnups, and dey pounded out some meal final'y from some nubbins. Cesar, I done has the bestest biscuits sence I 'gun t' use Dover's powders to raise 'em! I'se gwine neber t' be widout it ag'in! Lawful heart, the punishin' I had in slave times on dis same o' count! 'cause if de leaven too old de light bread wouldn't rise no way. I've done set up all night many a time to hab my bread ready f'r breakfast, Mas'r Peyton was dat p'tic'lar! 'Here, Dinah,' he says once, an' he looked as ef he could eat me, dat he did! 'D'ye see dem biscuit? how many are dere?' I ses twelve as

prompt, f'r I done count 'em las' t'ing 'fore I sent 'em t' the dinin'-room, so ef dat rascal of a Jack, de waiter boy, steal 'em I c'd tell f'r sartain who took 'em. 'Twelve, Mas'r Peyton,' I says. 'Well, you stan' where I c'n see you swaller ebery one; an' don't bring any more lead f'r us t' eat, or I'll sell ye at de next auction in Richmond.' An' I didn't dare deject, f'r I knowed Mas'r Peyton wa'n't ob de triflin' sort. But dey tasted like lead to me f'r suah."

"Dinah! how *could* you eat twelve biscuits?" scepti-cally queried Cesar, as he watched her place the nicely moulded lumps within the bake-kettle, cover closely, and heap thereon glowing coals.

"I dunno how. 'Spect de Lord mus' a holpt old Dinah, f'r I wasn't tooken sick arterward, but I couldn't abide light bread for months, an' to dis day I like John Constant best, t'ank Mas'r Peyton f'r dat!"

"I don't, den," muttered Cesar; "but I don't jedge him:

"'For he hab gone t' judgment, t' judgment,
Dey all hab gone t' gather aroun' de judgment seat,'"

sang Cesar.

"Ef only I had knowed about de lightsome Dover's powders I'd saved ole Dinah many a lash. But Mas'r Peyton neber meant to hurt me so I couldn't sell, so I was safe 'nough anyway jess keep me whar I ought ter be. I wish some ob der young ones could hab de same chance; dey am sartin sure de no 'countest set to work I eber see."

"'I hid b'hind a mountain,
'Twas dark, I could not see,
I call to Mas'r Jesus,
And lo! He set me free,'"

sang Cesar, meditatively.

"Dem is free indeed," assented Dinah, as she uncovered the kettle, and exposed the tempting circle of snowy puffs. "Dar, I'se proud ob dem!" she began; but remembering her former shortcomings when baking powders were unknown, she added humbly, "Ole Dinah can't take all de credit."

The two plumpest and brownest-topped were quietly rolled in a napkin and put aside for her neighbor. It is true a certain condescension was apparent in her manner, but she was a true Samaritan, and would not have seen even a dog suffer unrelieved. "Eb'rybody can't be quality folks! An' Miss Otely can't do f'r dese poor creeturs like I can—stan's t' reason she can't. She means to do what is right, but she don't know how."

In this manner Dinah innocently pledged her services as substitute for the charities which in some unreasoning fashion she felt ought to emanate from "the great house" toward these poor dependents on the estate, who rented a small portion of the large plantation to keep soul and body together.

VIII.

MRS. CRITTENDEN "GOES HER WAY."

THAT same midday sun streamed through the doorway of a log cabin, touching the "noon mark"—a nail driven in one of the warped floor-boards—and even resting on the pallid face upturned wearily, and on the thin hands

which feebly brushed away importunate flies from time to time. The miserable cabin, with the clay tumbling on all sides from the spaces between the logs, and the logs rotting away in places and "settling" into a leaning posture, windowless, its chimney outside of sticks and logs cemented into a reluctant companionship with a portion of the surrounding red clay, was hidden away in the Virginian forest. For several rods around the door was a clearing; not a vine, or flower, or rose-bush, nor any shrubbery crept up to redeem the bareness. In the wood-spaces all about birds were singing and fluttering and calling to the midday silence.

Here and there a sumac gleamed red among the pines on the outer edge—a sort of woodland fringe to the dense background of oak, white poplars, and the stately foliage of tulip trees, shining like satin.

Well-worn foot-paths ran through the underbrush, intersecting and branching off in all directions to neighboring cabins. Sometimes a line of smoke was visible from one point of view—Cesar Peachy's cabin—and the barking of many dogs often resounded through the "dim aisles." In these moonlight nights the woods were alive with opossum and coon hunters, both human and canine; the baying of hounds, the whistle and characteristic cries of the negroes, and the exciting chase and capture made a picturesque scene.

No one was visible, to-day, in these outlying cornfields. A young girl of fifteen lounged in the doorway, as if longing to go out, yet held back by some undefined restraint—not quite a sense of duty, nor yet of fear. She was not pretty, nor yet was she plain; she was too listless to be even interesting. As her mother moaned she turned occasionally with a stare of utter helplessness.

The little room was utterly bare of comforts. A bedstead of some sort there was, with straw in an uneven mass, and a ragged quilt spread over all, under which a woman lay, not old in years, but her face wrinkled and aged with pain. She had been a merry girl once, but it seemed ages since she had forced a laugh; certainly the girl in the doorway could not remember one; the mother was quiet and uncomplaining, but always weary, weary.

Two broken chairs, one with three legs, on which a body could sit if they understood the balancing; a square table and a cracked teacup on it, in which was a brassy-looking spoon; the unswept hearth, with a "skillet" hanging from a nail in the brick-work: there appeared no other furnishing.

"D'ye want anythin', maw?" lazily inquired the girl in the doorway.

A strange look came into the mother's weary face, but she made no answer.

"Le'me go'n see if Aunt Dinah'll come t' fix ye up better?"

"Ryolena, why do ye always want t' git away? I sha'n't keep ye much longer. I'll not see another sun-up. And what'll become of you? I don' seem t' know! I can't seem t' think clear."

Ryolena did not appear to understand, either; she turned and surveyed the invalid languidly. "Oh, maw, ye'll feel better by sundown; it's the heat ails ye! I wish paw'd come an' raise ye a bit. Le'me go for Aunt Dinah. She said, 'Come at any time.' Oh, here she be herself! she said she'd certainly come over."

"So I did, honey," the beaming face shining like jet. "Dinah allers keeps her word, so Cesar say. Cesar *such* an ole fool!" Her laugh gurgled up so full of cheerful-

ness that Ryolena joined willingly in it to shake off the nameless depression creeping over her.

"How's yer ma dis night, honey? Dar, now!" putting a covered bowl on the table. "I been to de house dis mornin'; jess got back a spell ago and kim right over. Mis' 'Tely she sent f'r me—hab some gran' comp'ny to dinner; mus' hab Dinah to make puffs an' poun'-cake, and Mis' Betty she made some ice-cream, and she sent you some, Mis' Crittenden, an' hopes you'se gittin' better."

But the sick woman turned away wearily. "I'm *so* tired! I wish it was sun-up to-morrow."

"Oh, well, we can't hurry de sun, suah," gurgled Dinah. "You'se tooken worser dan las' night, 'pears to me," queried the neighbor. "Dar, now, reckon you'll rest better. Ry'lene might have fixed ye up better'n dat way ye was."

"It don't matter. Yes, I shall rest. I'll sleep low, sleep low. If 'twa'n't f'r *her* now—she's pore and helpless, no comp'ny for white folks and none for you uns. But I'm tired to-night, I can't think."

"Well, ole Mas'r, *He* knows—dat's what Cesar allers say 'bout eb'ryt'ing. He won't 'flict us more'n we c'n bear. Trust de lamb to Him, Mis' Crittenden! He'll bring her safely into de kingdom!"

Dinah had risen into unwonted eloquence.

"But I don't know Him. I *can't* trust Him," earnestly whispered the set lips. "He is nothin' t' me. I'm not goin' t' Him. Ef I only knowed where I *was* goin'!" A spasm choked utterance.

Aunt Dinah solemnly lifted her hand. "You done clar f'rgit de Bible promises, chile! Ye *can't* git nowhar outside de blessed promises! ole Mas'r knows what's best f'r eb'ry one o' His chillern. I done leave

all my troubles of eb'ry sort wid Him; reckon you'll hab to do de same. An' now you mus' done go t' sleep an' rest. I mus' go git Cesar's supper, but I'll come fustest t'ing in de mornin'."

By and by night fell on the little woodland cabin, and Josiah Crittenden came in, in a reluctant way.

"Ryolena Carosene," he began, in a measured drawl, "whar's the fire, an' whar's the supper. One can't work an' go hungry."

"Hev you been a-workin', paw?" asked the daughter, coming in with an armful of dry pine fagots, the dead cones clinging in massive bunches around the scaly stems. Somewhere amid the ashes in the fireplace she found a spark, which she blew, kneeling close beside it, until it glowed like a star. Then a flame leaped forth, and in an instant a fire was roaring and crackling up the rude chimney.

"Well, mebbe I hev," he slowly drawled. "It's the curse o' Canaan to work. But I dunno's I know what it's for. White folks hev no business to work; it's for the African's good to toil. I'se bin raised *not* to work ef I could git shet of it, and some way I can't make no headway at it. I wish I hed a couple of able-bodied niggers t' do f'r me."

"But, paw, you never kin; you know they's all free," said Ryolena, getting out a pan of corn-meal, and bestirring herself quite briskly, wetting the meal with water and kneading it into a glutinous mass.

"Mebbe 'twill all come round some time," drawled Josiah oracularly. "They won't allers stay free; it stan's t' reason."

His daughter did not press the point. She was poising the dough on one plump palm, then tossing it quickly from one hand to another until shapely in outline. As

she bent over the glowing coals, and raked away the ashes from the centre of the hearth, carefully depositing the pone and covering it with clean cinders, she made a pretty enough picture, despite the poverty and the squalid bareness of her surroundings.

Her father eyed her proceedings in a lazy contentment, implying, more forcibly than words, "Here now is comfort—none greater except for a slice of bacon and coffee, perhaps—those *would* be luxury indeed! To rest and eat! what *is* better in all the world!"

While the ash-cake was cooking she drew out the square table, from some hidden corner drew out a plate of like condition to the teacup, all checkered o'er with straggling seams where the glaze had cracked with heat; also an iron-handled knife, its blade nicked in the centre—forks they never had possessed.

"Now, paw, you c'n set up t' the table while I rake open the ash heap."

"Ryolena Carosene, ax yer maw if she'll hev some bread!" drawled Josiah, brushing off the ashes and breaking open the fragrant pone. "Yer maw seems porely-like this evenin', 's if she's tireder than common."

"I know she won't, paw; she couldn't touch the ice Aunt Dinah left. My! how good it smells! meltin' fast it be. I reckon maw won't keer if I eat it, to save it."

"I reckon she won't," assented Josiah. "I touched her jess now, b't she didn't stir. She is restin' pow'ful f'r her;" and the daughter took Dinah's bowl, plunging therein the brassy-looking spoon.

"Yer maw ain't 'wake yit," said Josiah an hour later, preparing for slumber. "She's sartainly restin' f'r once in her life."

And so she was! While the two beings nearest her in

human sympathy were quietly satisfying human needs, she had slipped away from them forever; so gently, so peacefully parted with the tired body that they knew not the moment of transition.

It was in the morning, with the sunrise, so longed for the evening before, when Josiah made the discovery. After the first startled look, his features settled again into their usual calm indifference.

"Ryolena Carosene, step here; yer maw has gone her way."

After a while he slowly added: "Yer maw was a good woman, but a pow'ful tired one! It don't seem reely so, but it is; she's left us and gone her way."

While in his ignorant fashion he was meditating upon his loss, Aunt Dinah Peachy was making ready to go to the succor of his wife.

She was picturing to herself the look of pleasure from the dull eyes when she should unpack the basket she was now filling with such simple luxuries as she had; the white biscuits, a pat of freshly-churned butter—and she rifled her store of honey, filling a teacup generously.

"Couldn't do more f'r ole Mas'r Hisself," she muttered, contentedly, lifting the cover to peer inside once more. "'Pears like dat's all He asks a pore body—do what dey can. Hi, Cesar! t'ought you done gwine to de field! I s'rprises youse gittin' ready f'r a shake, you look mighty blue. I clar, I done f'rgot t' steep up some boneset. I kep' sayin' it all day yistiddy to b'ar it in mind, but gwine over to Josi Crittenden's an' seein' dat pore creetur—dat mus' hab made ole Dinah done f'rgit."

IX.

"DAT OLE JOSI!"

"SEEMS 's if de Lord was abroad dis mornin'," mused Dinah, as she trod the narrow forest path. "I feel discommon solemn, dunno why! I dreamed all de night 'bout dis pore creetur I'm boun' fur. 'Peared like she was a-waitin' f'r jedgment, an' neber a-gittin' it. 'Spect it's a sign dat she am better dis mornin'. My dreams am mighty apt t' go contrary—"

Here Dinah broke off to laugh, silently at first; then she overflowed into an audible "ki-yi," and finally set her basket on the stump of a felled tree the better to indulge her merriment.

"Well, well! dis'll neber do!" she gasped at last. "Dinah can't stan' foolin' away de precious time like dis yer. But dat ole fool ob a Josi did look so pow'ful cur'us in my dream! an' he wur fixed up so queer! a yaller coat an' a red hat, an' de coat come down so long it wur tied roun' his heels. An' he stood up 'fore a mighty big angel wid wings dat spre'd ober half de world, an' he say he rastle wid de angel, he will. An' de angel jess move one dem big white wings de leastest bit, an' poo! away goes de red hat an' de yaller robe, ober an' ober like a mill-wheel. I done laugh so in my sleep dat I wake up an' spile de rest.

"Stop dar!" muttered Dinah, as she neared the solitary cabin. "I hears a saw gwine—I certainly do! wonder what he's up to now—dat ole Josi! Should t'ink he mought chink up dem logs ef nothin' more; it'll tumble down ober his head some day; mighty little he cares! mighty pore trash am ole Josi!"

Josiah looked up slowly from his work of sawing boards, when she darkened the doorway, and anticipated her surprised inquiries :

"Well, Aunt Dinah, Mis' Crittenden's gone her way !"

Too astonished to speak, her eyes followed the steady movement of his long, lank arm, till at last the board dropped with a rattle to the floor.

"It's a c'nsid'rable of a s'rprise to all on us," holding off the board and sighting with one eye closed. "Take a cheer, Aunt Dinah, an' rest ye ; I wa'n't lookin' to hev her go so fur away an' she so tired like—"

"She won't be tired no more, neber, poor lamb !" interrupted Dinah, with emphasis.

"No. She's gone her way, an' I mus' go mine—we all mus'," mused the bereaved husband.

"But, Mr. Crittenden, you oughtn't do dat yourself ; dere's Peter Harris'd be willin' f'r t' help ye."

"Yis, an' dun me for the pay up to Chris'mas, an' how'm I goin' to pay then ? I don't keer, Aunt Dinah. I reckon I c'n take proper keer o' my own. Ryolena Carosene is gone to the spring ; she'll be glad of yer 'sistance, I reckon. We shall have the buryin' this evening."

He resumed his planing.

"I reckon I'd better done go to de house an' see Miss 'Tely 'bout it," quoth Dinah, thoughtfully. "I know for suah she'll be pow'ful willin' to let Mis' Crittenden lie in de fam'ly seminary ; all us old servants is buried dar."

"I dunno, Aunt Dinah, 's I'd be willin' f'r her to be there. They didn't take no more notice o' her 'n as if she'd been a rat. I'm 'feared she'd rise in her grave ; she wouldn't feel easy like 'mong so many gran' folks."

Aunt Dinah felt the irony; it stung her simple soul, but she forebore rejoinder.

"It's only old Josi! what does Dinah care?" she whispered to herself, as she busied herself in the last offices for the dead.

As the evening shadows lengthened a group of colored neighbors, fifteen or twenty in number, gathered before Josiah Crittenden's open door. One or two of the men went inside and helped bear the rude coffin out into the forest silence. They set it down by an open grave, and waited. Breezes came and went, rustling the leaves.

"I done feel as ef I mus' put out a prayer," whispered Cesar, half-inquiringly. "De pore creetur mus'n't be kivered up in de groun' widout no prayer, suah!" But a sign from Dinah restrained him. Then his songful propensity rose like a bird to his aged lips, and amid the wondering stillness of the others he quavered forth:

"De Lord am my Shep'ard. He makes me ter lie—"

He was arrested by the uplifted finger of Josiah Crittenden, and his slow, "Hush! I don't want no singin'. The angels are singin' t' her now; let *them* sing!"

While the grave was slowly filled and levelled by Josiah the neighbors waited. One or two proffered their services, and were waved back: "I never did a gre't deal f'r my old woman, I know, when she were livin'. I reck'n I mought a holpt her 'long some over the rough places. Pore soul! 'twas allers sort o' rough f'r her, an' she growed tireder of 't ev'ry day, till at las' she went her way. This is the las' thing I c'n do f'r her, an' I mean ter do it."

He paused, surveying his completed work, then

turned to the friendly group, saying: "Good-evenin' friends, good-evenin'! Mis' Crittenden hes gone *her* way, an' we mus' go our'n."

Only a slight girl of fifteen lingered, with wistful, unanswered glances at the levelled mound. Her dull eyes roved round the familiar surroundings, taking in the tangled thickets of the forest beyond, as well as the dreary structure called "home." Was she trying to understand what it was her life had missed having—always missed?—there were no happier memories to abate the bitterness of the present!—was it some natural yearning over the best portion of her brief life now covered by the mould? was it only a vague sense of loneliness which oppressed her—the sense of being mysteriously near the confines of that other life, within whose portal her mother had glided, like the shadow she would be henceforward to her child? Who could tell? The outside loneliness seemed less dreaded than the barren silence and desolation in-doors. And not knowing what else to do, they all left her; the setting sun reminded each of home duties.

"It 'pears t' me I ruther be black folks an' b'lieve in somefin' dan white folks an' b'lieve in noth'n'," observed Aunt Molly Harris, in a confidential undertone, as they trudged away from the burial.

"We has de preciousest priv'leges, Molly. But den dere am heaps wuss folks dan de Crittendens, I 'spect," answered Dinah, charitably. "An' ole Mas'r He knows best. Some gits t' Him one way an' some anoder; an' I 'spect Mis' Crittenden, pore soul! hab gone de only way she knew. Pore, tired-out creetur! Reckon 'tain't a sort ob r'lief t' her a'ready, Molly?"

"I dunno, Dinah, b't sh'll sleep dar till de resumrecksh'n. 'Pears like I neber see *dat* yer sight ag'in—a

man a-tak'n comfort in fillin' up his wife's grave," said Molly, with solemn emphasis.

"Dat ole Josi!" said Dinah. The cheerful creature could not repress her laugh a moment longer. "I wonder who am boun' f'r t' make *his* coff'n? Hi! I done feel so sorry f'r Cesar dis ebenin'; he wus a-spilin' f'r t' sing, I could see. 'Spect de angels wouldn't a-keered ef his song *had* j'ined theirs. Hear him, Molly! he's lightin' de fire f'r supper, an' singin' 'Rock ob Ages.' 'Twill sort ob relieve his feelin's. Dat ole Josi!"

X.

AUNT LUCINDA GATHERS CAT-TAILS.

Little Pete Dixon was performing a series of evolutions, which he denominated "turnin' cart-wheels," to the infinite diversion of the ebony group surrounding Aunt Lucindy's doorway. Suddenly he paused, heels uppermost, to inquire:

"Whar yer done gwine, mammy?"

"I'm a-gwine down ter King's ole field t' fill my feather-bed, an' yer's t' stay close—d'ye hear?—an' ten' ter dese yer chillen!" said Lucindy, slowly, with emphatic noddings of her sleepy-looking head.

Not that she was sleepy, by any means; she had the reputation among her neighbors (and especially among her sisters in the church) of being "a rapid sort of woman!" "pow'ful sot in her own way is Sister Lucindy!"

Little Pete appeared to confirm the truth of this criticism, for he made haste to answer :

" I'se boun' fur ter stay clus, suah's I'se born !"

" Ye see, Pete," went on his mammy, lapsing into a confidential tone as she wound a yellow kerchief round her head, " 'long de branch dere in King's am a pow'ful sight o' cat-tails. I'se been a-watchin' 'em eber sence dey leaved out, an' I'se tuk such good care ob 'em dat 'pears like dey jess b'longs t' me more'n anybody ; an' dey am jess right t' pull now, an' I'm done boun' f'r ter go arter 'em 'fore Sister Betsy Bannister fin's 'em out. I heerd her say only last meetin' day dat her feather-bed done slump away so she was boun' fur t' go huntin' cat-tails soon. Sister Betsy allers did git ahead o' me, an' I 'clare ter Moses I don't mean she shall dis yer time. Pow'ful cute Sister Betsy allers wus, suah, an' it grows on her, I c'n see. She am de spryest member in de church, an' it done 'pears ter me dat de Lawd's grace in her soul done beats up all de stupid lumps in her natur', f'r de res' on us can't done kotch up wid her nohow. Dere, Sister Bannister, I'se been tooken wid a 'sire ter tell de truf on ye onct in my life, suah !"

" Hi !" grinned Pete, with a double evolution which landed him on top of the baby sprawling on the ground.

" You Pete ! what ye done do dat yer f'r ? Pick him up an' wipe de dirt outen him eyes ! An' now I mus' trabble along right smart. Jess you rake open dem yer ashes an' pull outen de pone dat's a-bakin' when de chillern gits hungry, an' min' yer keeps 'em from tumblin' in derselfs, ef ye kin ! An' I'll hoof it down ter King's an' fill my bag."

Aunt Lucindy was out of sight before she finished, but that was of small consequence to her ; she was her own best listener always, and she continued to think aloud as

she "hoofed it" over the red clay, dodging a gully, paddling through a branch with her bare feet, then striking straight across a "stretch o' land" grown up to tall broom-straw, with myriad entangling shoots of the low-growing dewberry vines interlacing the rustling grasses.

"I done 'clar! I hear dar's a chance o' snakes! 'pears I better keep both eyes open; I s'pose de groun' ain't worked 'nough now ter done kill de eggs. I dunno 's I care greatly 'bout de milk snakes an' de chasers, b't when 't comes ter treadin' on a moc'sin wid my bare huf, ole Lucindy'll run like ole Satan hisself, dat she will."

Having now reached the swamp she surveyed with a delighted grin the rows on rows of nodding plumes—their serried ranks drawn close, like soldiers waiting for battle, and swiftly she fell to beheading them.

"I'se not gwine ter stop f'r t' beat 'em up right now," she muttered. "Pete an' Sukey c'n do dat bam-bye. I done 'clar! it's mighty lucky dat one crap'll grow yere in King's widout de leastest trouble!"

"Well, dat's so, suah!" assented a voice so suddenly that Lucinda jumped, scattering her armful of catkins right and left. The voice added a loud laugh at her discomfiture. "Why, Sister Lucindy, did I done skeer ye so? I done seed yer was pow'ful tooken up wid yer wild fedders. I'se boun' fur t' come roun' dis way on 'count of Betsy axin' would I step roun' an' see if dey wur ready ter pull, an' I done like f'r ter 'bleege my ole woman. I seed yer a long ways off, as busy as a crow in plant'n' time, an' a-talkin' ter yerself, jess as usual."

"I re'k'n I wusn't skeered bery pow'ful. Ob course one'll jump when dey's 'spectin' ter see nobody. Howdy, howdy!" Lucindy wiped her glistening face.

"Jess toler'ble, toler'ble! It's so warm an' dry dat

noth'n' can't grow ! neber knowed sech a dry spell afore. I reckon 't am a jedgment on us somehow," said Jerry Bannister.

"For what den ?" briskly inquired Lucindy. "I t'ought we uns wus reck'ned 'bout as good as mos' folks."

"Well, I dunno, I'm suah. Betsy says so, an' she's gin'rally right. Ter change de subjeck, I reckon Betsy kin tote off her sheet full o' cat-tails mos' any day. Here's 'nough fur de hull county ob 'Mely. Beats all how 'mazin' thick dey does grow !"

"Sart'in !" assented Lucinda, picking furiously. "I've done filled my bag a'ready ! B't I'se boun' ter take anoder turn at 'em ; dere's sart'in suah a right smart chance o' 'em dis year, an' dey do beat up pow'ful light—mighty nigh as good as rale fedders. I ain't seen a snake neither ; bress de Lawd f'r all His marcies ! "

"Wall, snake pizen *is* suthin' ter run from, suah ! I dunno what Brother Robbins is gwine t' do wid dat darter o' his. There's Betsy, now, goes f'r t' say 'tain't no snake pizen as ails her. *She* says de gal am sure b'witched, f'r she's seen de spell done move in a dream. I dunno how she knows, but she mos' gin'rally gits t'ings mighty nigh right, does Betsy."

"Sister Betsy am pow'ful smart," conceded Aunt Lucindy. "De rightsome way f'r t' do is t' put it inter de church, an' ef it's pizen 'twon't hurt her none, an' ef she's cunjured we saints mus' break de spell !" The yellow turban nodded solemnly. "It's sinner folks' doin's, ye know, Brother Jerry, an' I knows well who's had a spite 'ginst Mose Robbins's fam'ly eber sence freedom. I reckon Brother Mose senses too, b't he's de peaceablest man in de county, an' won't turn on a mad dog till he am bit clean t'rough."

"Wall, de church hez been axed t' take it up at las', and we're t' hold a meet'n' t'-night, an' we hopes you'll be dar, Sister Lucindy."

"I do d'clar! I knowed 'twas kimin. Eber sence las' Chris'mus I've hed de strangest feelin', 'specially toward de full ob de moon. Me an' Mose is first cousins' chillern, ye know, Brother Bannister, an' I allers did take on all de troubles of my kinfolk." Lucinda's face lengthened with a solemnity suited to the occasion, as she settled her bag on her head and strode over the weeds and brambles—the latter clutching viciously at her stout checked "Virginny cloth" gown.

"Hev dey 'sulted Solomon 'bout it?" she asked, in an awed whisper.

A mocking-bird in a treetop broke into such a joyous flood of melody that Brother Bannister delayed his answer a moment to listen.

"O' coorse dey hev, an' it's all boun' f'r t' come up in meet'n'. I dunno 's I hold ter Betsy's notion. 'Pears ter me it's de snake pizen what ails her, case de chillern done seed her eat de snake, suah."

"She dunno no better. She's de Lawd's chile" (meaning one deficient in intellect), "an' ole Mas'r am boun' f'r t' take keer o' His own; dat yer snake, s'pos'n, she did eat um, neber go f'r t' hurt her, s'pos'n' she et 'im, tail an' all," declared Lucindy, positively. "My road home done turn here, Brother Jerry; tell Sister Betsy howdy f'r me."

Evening came, and Lucinda stood in her doorway listening to the whippoorwills. One by one the stars came out brightly; she appeared to seek among them as for a sign. "'Tain't time yit," she muttered, turning to reprimand Pete and Chloe, who were quarrelling over the contents of mammy's bag of "wild feathers." "Dar

now, you Pete, you done quit yer foolin' ! and, Chloe, you keep ter yer own sheer ! An' I wants yer ter pull 'em all up light an' not throw 'em roun' none ! an' let de h'a'th alone ! You Pete ! don't yer go f'r t' rake open de fire, and don't let de baby crawl dere, not once —d'ye hear ?"

"Whar yer gwine, mammy ?" whimpered Chloe. "I'm done 'fear'd t' stay 'long wid Pete. He knocks us roun' so."

"I neber did, mammy. Dat yer am a fool-trick, it am ! Case she's 'fear'd o' hants comin'. *I* ain't 'fear'd now, dat I ain't !" and the boy drew himself up proudly.

"Well, now, yer mus' be good chillern, case mammy hab got ter go ter meet'n', suah ! an', you Pete, take good keer yer little sisters, case yer's a man, yer know— mammy's little man ! An' I'll jess lock de do', an' dar can't no hants git in, Chloe, ter bother ye none."

"Dey kin creep through de keyhole," whined Chloe. "Pete done say so."

"Dat dey can't, den, specially when de key am in 't. An' dar am my figger-stars kimin' up, a-twinklin' like baby eyes, an' a-sayin' ter Lucindy, Come ter de meet'n'." She stole a long look at the Pleiades as she spoke, and locked the cabin door and hurried away.

XI.

A MIDNIGHT INCANTATION.

In a leisurely manner "the saints" strolled into the long, low structure of logs set apart for their church. Benches lined the sides, and a square pine table stood at one end, serving for a pulpit.

Little Sally Robbins had been brought in at an early hour, a fragile-looking creature, who looked about ten years old; in reality she was eighteen. Her small, yellow face was seamed and puckered, as if distorted with pain. Her slight figure half sat, half reclined on a bench, perfectly immovable; her eyes glittered, bead-like, in the gloom of her corner, and occasionally her tongue protruded from her full red lips, lolling like a panting dog's.

Fear, aversion, and pity! Uncle Moses looked slowly from one face to another, reading one of these expressions on each face present. He sighed, and suddenly gave vent to a dismal groan, which had a similar effect on the subdued crowd that a thunder-clap has on a highly electrical atmosphere.

In the midst of the excitement Brother Moses spoke: "My sperrit's too broken t' pray t'-night. I done wish some one'd pray f'r me an' mine."

"I did 'xpect'd our preacher 'd be here dis evenin'," remarked Brother Fisher; "but as he didn't see fit ter come we mus' induct de sarvices ourselves. I'll take our brother's trouble to de Lawd."

After a lengthy prayer: "De bery fus' t'ing am ter lay de fac's ob de case 'fore de saints in council. An' we're boun' ter holp de suff'rer outen her mizry."

The girl's father came slowly forward. "De fac's are dese: It is bery nigh two months since Sally ate a snake; her brother and sister saw her do it, an' tried to stop her, b't she run away, laughin', an' dey couldn't kotch up wid her. 'Pears like it was t' be; her mother neber knowed it afore she began ter act so strangely dat we require roun' 'mong de chillern f'r t' fin' out ef anyt'ing mor'n or'nary had happened t' her when we wasn't by. You all knows dat our Sally's allers been 'flicted special by de Lawd eber sence she's born; but dis yer state am a 'stronary disposal."

He paused to allow his words time to take effect. "I put forth an oration 'bout it: ef de snake had a-pizened Sally 'twould a-come on her right away, 'pears ter me; what folks call remejet in its 'fects."

He spoke slowly, and his "oration" evidently impressed the people.

"Dat am so!" cried out Betsy Bannister, briskly. "De truf am what we want. Hev you 'sulted Brother Solomon?"

"I hev, Sister Betsy. I insulted him direckly. An' he say, arter look'n at de signs ob de hebbens, dat it am not de pizen what ails Sally."

There was a rustling stir of expectancy; the situation was developing in interest.

Here Brother Solomon advanced from the crowd, leaning heavily on his staff. He was nearly a centenarian, and his large black face was lined with innumerable wrinkles, but his voice was firm and mild in tone, and his large eyes shone with the fire of perpetual youth.

Brother Solomon was born in Africa, and his mind was a mine of tropical memories. He was old enough to remember the scenes of that far-away home, including his young mother there, whose dusky limbs shone like

satin in the sunlight and were fleet as a fawn's in the race. Her voice was "like de tinkle ob silver bells, an' she allers wore strings ob shells an' Guinea beans." Solomon dwelt with loving reverence on her perfections of form and feature, and he could never bring himself to picture her as grown aged and infirm, or as dead. Her tears and affrighted wonder when one day he was torn from her side and borne away to the little boat hidden among the water-weeds, were painfully vivid. "She cried out, 'O Kishni! Kishni!' but no one came to rescue me; and den she ran away too, an' de little boat went over de billows to a big ship, an' we sailed f'r weeks. I disremember how many. S'pose I couldn't count den nohow. My mother was a chief's daughter; she was waited on, an' she never labored."

All the long years of Brother Solomon's servitude had not impaired his naturally noble presence. Despite the rigid surveillance of slavery, he had acquired some knowledge of letters; he could write passably, and in occult arts and mystic lore his learning was unquestioned—an inheritance, in strict line of descent, from the chieftain's daughter!

"De stars declar' it's midnight," said Brother Solomon, impressively. "Bring de maiden to de front ob de room!" he commanded.

It was done. He then drew from his pocket a small substance resembling plumbago; stooping, he drew a circle around the passive girl. Then a ring was formed of twelve persons outside this magic circle, and, surging and swaying to the weird, wild measure of an African song, the mystic twelve danced around the "conjured one."

At first Sally looked on idly, then curiously watched the gyrating figures, the contortions of her muscles

growing every moment more violent. She suddenly leaped to her feet and began to join in the measure of the dancers, still keeping inside the circle.

And now Brother Solomon, in a strange voice, called out loudly, as if seeing forms invisible to the others, and said words which none present could understand. He upraised his staff, and stood with bowed head expectant.

The dancers wildly gesticulated, and shouted rather than sang:

"Gi' me de ole time, de ole time 'ligion!
Our fadders' ole 'ligion
What libed b'yent de sea
Am mighty good 'ligion,
An' good 'nough f'r me!"

A flash of lightning came and went, followed by a thunder peal. Then cries arose from variously pitched voices, "Dar's His eye!" "I done hear His voice, suah!" "De dear Lawd am wid us!" mingled with the singing, and they all dropped on their knees to pray, all except Sally, who fell to the floor, rigid as a marble statue.

"Dere am trouble a-brewin' in de air f'r some on ye," said Solomon, in a deep voice, as he stood erect. "I done see it in de air! May de Lawd giv' ye grace ter b'ar it 'thout c'mplaint. And now go ter yer homes an' leave dis shorn lam' ter her parents an' me."

Uncle Moses carried Sally to his cabin and laid her on her own "pallet," murmuring: "I dunno b't when she kims outen it she'll be peart ag'in; I dunno b't she'll be dead; b't which way 'tis it's from ole Marster's hand, an' He knows jess how much we c'n b'ar."

"Brother Solomon says," whispered his wife Mildred, who had lingered behind to inquire of the oracle what result they were to expect, "dat we mus'n't look f'r no

change 'fore de new ob de moon. He done hopes dat de spell am broke, suah; b't what *is* t' be *will* be!"

"Which I knowed afore," rejoined Moses, tartly. Then softening: "Ole Marster be praised!" with devout tremblings; "we done hear Him speak loud t'-night."

"Cur'us," quoth Mildred, meditatively. "Not a drop ob rain done fall dis night! 'Pears as ef He speak jess f'r our miz'ry."

"Ef we am ter b'lieve de Scripture, Milly, we're done 'bleeged ter think so. F'r we know dat His ways ar' turrible an' pas' findin' out."

"Hush!" Aunt Mildred went to the door to listen. "'Pears ter me I heerd a strange sound ober dar in de woods. B't it's all died away now."

"I'll go an' see," said Moses. "I does hope de woods won't get afire dis yer dry spell. Yer c'n ten' ter Sally well 'nough, I reck'n."

XII.

"MAMMY'S LITTLE PETE."

After Lucindy had locked the door and gone, there was silence in the little cabin for awhile. They huddled together in the darkness, listening to the sound of her retreating footsteps; then to the melancholy iteration of the whippoorwills in the trees around the dwelling. The dense forest shut them in on two sides. At the rear was cleared space enough for a shed, which was also a

stable for the one cow—Lucinda's sole possession in the way of stock—and a pen for the shoats, her especial pride. There were no windows in the dwelling, and no means of exit but the one door. Before this door the woods were somewhat more cheery; the oaks were massive, interspersed with lighter growth of dogwood and poplar, and a path, well trodden, led away, little Chloe thought, to the end of the world. She knew that somewhere on this path lived Uncle Giles, who gave her "gubber peas" and chincapins, and who used to say, "No marter! pick yerself up!" when she came to grief through Pete's tyrannic teasing.

"Pete, whar does mammy go ter meet'n'? ter hebben?"

"I dunno," answered Pete, uncertainly. "I seed de church, b't I dunno how de meet'n' gits in."

"Pete," drawing closely to him, "did yer hear her tak' out de key? *Can* de hants creep t'rough de keyhole?"

"I reck'n not. I lissn'd clus, I did, when she war a-turn'n' hit, an' she leff it in de keyhol', she did. Ef dar was a winder, as dar am in Uncle Giles's 'ouse, I'd clip 't outen hyar mighty quick, an' let us out. De stars am a-shin'n' outen dar, an' when mammy shet de do' dem lamps went out so!"

Chloe began to whimper, "I wish mammy wouldn't go ter meet'n'. Hit am so dark."

Suddenly Pete straightened himself. "I tells yer, Chloe, yer needn't be 'fear'd whar *I* be. Don' yer know dat I'm mammy's little man? I won't let nothin' tech ye. An' I've t'ought o' sumfin', I hes, dis minit. We'll poke de fire up a little, an' put some dese yer cattails on f'r wood, an' den we c'n see better'n dan ef de stars was shin'n'."

"But mammy said we wusn't ter tech de fire," objected Chloe.

"Mammy neber knowed 'twas a-gwine ter be so pow'ful dark. Her was so tooken up wid gitten off, dat she done f'rgot we couldn't see ter beat up dese fedders she tole us ter. How we gwine ter beat 'em up 'less we see? Coorse we mus' see!"

While the "little man" was quieting his sister's scruples, he was busily working out his idea, and soon the merry flames went leaping up the log chimney. It was a cheery sight, and Chloe forgot her superstitious fears, and fell to work. The baby had betaken herself to sleep long before on the hard earth floor, and the unusual illumination did not waken her.

"Now you toss on a few, Chloe, an' den I'se de nex'. 'Spect mammy don't mean f'r t' tote fedders f'r us ter burn up. I golly!"

"What is 't, Pete, yer a-starin' so? An' what am dat roarin'? How de wind blo'!"

"'Tain't de win', Chloe. We uns done sot de chimney afire, dat's all. Hi! him done roar mighty!"

Little Pete was afraid, but he ranked his courage a peg higher than Chloe's, and he scorned to show fear before her. Besides, he felt a boy's exultation at the unusual event; the "big roarin'," the crackling of the dry logs as the mud chinks fell away, and the eager flames licked the empty spaces!

A bucket of water stood by the door, with a gourd dipper for drinking. Roused at last Pete darted for it, and began throwing dipperfuls on the fire. He was a plucky little fellow, and though the smoke nearly stifled him, he had no thought of ceasing work. But a bucketful of water was so little! and the door was locked, with the key outside!

Chloe was crying piteously. The sound exasperated little Pete. "Oh, hush dat racket now! sech a fool-trick ter blubber, dat it am! Scream, Chloe, scream! I t'ink Uncle Giles'll git ter us ef yer'll holler jess as loud as ye kin."

"I can't, Pete. 'Deed I can't," she gasped. "Oh, Pete!" And through that frightful scene the baby never woke.

And now Pete shouted lustily for help. "Uncle Giles! G-i-l-e-s!" rang shrilly amid the crackling, crisping flames, while Chloe beat the door with her small fists, crying, "Why don' mammy come, Pete? whar's mammy?"

Giles was dreaming on his pallet, and stirring uneasily, as if his visions were abhorrent. Finally he sat up on his ragged couch, with a suddenness which seemed to startle his usual composure.

"'Fore de mighty Moses now, I done b'lieve de haag done ride me! I neber feel s' sort or fluskatered as jess dis yer minit. Miss Maryon say der ain't no sech t'ing as de haag nohow. Mabbe der ain't way up Norf, whar she wus raised. Stan's ter reason dey won't be done cotched up dar in de cold, when dey kin git plenty o' victims down hyar, whar 't am more 'gre'able. 'Spect Miss Maryon 'll make de 'quaintance ŏb dat dis'spec'-able pusson ef she lib hyar long 'nough!

"Wall, I can't sleep no mo', an' I'll take a look out do'."

The instant the old man stepped to the ground he perceived that something was happening. "I seems ter smell smoke 'n de air, I does. Whar c'n it be? Dar now, dat yer cow a-mooin' am Lucindy's, I reck'n. I'll step up dar an' see ef anyt'in's de marter. Lucindy am a pow'ful spry sort, b't mighty keerless 'bout some t'ings,

apt ter sot her pipe on de shelf wid de fire lef' in 't. I telled her mor'n once she'd rue 't some day, b't she larf, an' arnswer, 'Oh, Giles, yer am allers a-look'n' out f'r ebil, an' 't neber kims.' Mabbe I am sorter dat yer way too much. I b'lieves in people's keerin' f'r demselves, an' ef ole Giles don't see ter hisself don't t'ink nobody else will."

Uncle Giles was a solitary. In all the amusements of his race he never betrayed the slightest interest. From all their feasts and fasts and holidays he kept away. Christmas to him was as any other week, to be lived through in his usual quiet fashion, with his slice of bacon soaking in the skillet, and John Constant waiting in the ashes to strengthen him for daily labor. He never attended meetings, nor weddings, nor burials. He was wifeless and childless, but all the wives in the neighborhood came to him for aid and counsel in their marital quarrels, and every child instinctively trusted in him. Never demonstrative, affable and moderate in tone always, he was kind without knowing it, often with no intention of kindness.

Little Pete, in his extremity, thought intuitively of Giles's aid, though other cabins were as near in different directions.

"De mighty Moses!" Giles lifted up his voice and shouted, again and again. Over the hill beyond the echoes repeated his cry in mocking fragments of sound. The cow had broken her rope, and he could see her crushing through the undergrowth of the forest. Where the dwelling had stood at sunset, when he had passed by, now remained a few smouldering logs, from which smoke ascended as from an ancient altar of sacrifice.

Giles was astonished and puzzled. If the family had

escaped, he was surprised that no one had been summoned to help in extinguishing the fire, which was spreading slowly. The shed had caught, and a creeping, snake-like coil could be seen darting through the dry leaves here and there.

Without pausing to listen to the result of his cry, he armed himself with pine boughs and set to work. Fighting fire in the woods is no unusual experience to the Virginian negro. Giles worked in a way which showed that he knew how to deal with those fiery serpents, and with an energy that threatened their extinction. Nevertheless, he rejoiced at the sound of running steps and a breathless "Hallo! what am all dis yer?"

The voice he knew to belong to Judah Harris. "I can't stop ter 'splain, now; come, man, work at dat shed ober yander; mabbe yer c'n sav' it yit!"

"Yer see, I wuz waitin' up f'r Molly t' come frum de meet'n', an' I was kotched asleep'n my cheer, an' den I rouse up like, an' couldn't git 't outen me dat 'twus time Molly oughter kim, an' I say 'loud, 'Judah, you'm an ole fool, suah, as ef Molly couldn't tak' keer herse'f! An' I walked out 'long de road quite a piece, an' a suddin I heerd a shout, an' anoder, an' den anoder, an' I knowed den 'twus time f'r me ter run. So I did. An' mighty glad I be I c'd holp ye some."

The men had ceased work, and stood regarding the mournful ruins of Lucinda's home.

"Ob coorse Lucindy's at de church. I wonder ef de chilluns am wid her?" slowly observed Giles.

"I 'spect not," said Judah, decidedly. "'Tain't de sort ob 'casion when dey'd tak' chilluns. Dey'm like ter be leff' hum, b't, ob coorse, dey've run off ter some ob de neighbors."

Giles looked troubled. Before he could reply voices

and footsteps were heard, and a group surrounded the two men with excited exclamations.

Every eye turned to Lucindy. Her powerful frame, drawn up to its full height, was outlined by the dull glow from the dying embers. One massive hand clutched at her heaving breasts as if she would tear away some obstacle to speech; the other pointed to Uncle Giles in silence. Full of a compassion that waited in a decorous silence, no one could speak.

Suddenly her grasp relaxed; her hands fell to her side motionless, and she shouted: "F'r de good Lawd Almighty's sake, tell me—tell me whar am de chillern! Whar am my Pete, an' Chloe, an' my baby?

"Say yer got 'em out, Giles! say 't! Yer couldn't go ter be so cruel as ter lebe 'em ter die like dat!"

"I didn't know dey wus in yere," said Giles, in an awed tone. "Ob coorse dey run off some'er's."

"Oh, dey didn't! dey couldn't! case I locked 'em in! I tell yer all, afore God, dat I done lock 'em in ter keep 'em safe while I war gone. O Lawd God, I locked 'em in!" Her great body shook and trembled as with an ague fit; then she fell suddenly prostrate, with powerful convulsions.

"Pore soul! dat am hard ter b'ar!" said Judah, pityingly.

"Brother Solomon done say dat dar were trouble in de a'r; him see de signs a-movin'," observed Molly. "But we mus' straight'n our souls ter b'ar what de Lawd done chuse t' sen' us. 'Twon't do no good ter kick 'gin Prov'dence!"

Giles, who had been silent, awed, and sad in the presence of this scene, here lost all control of himself, and burst forth wrathfully:

"Talk 'bout de Lawd sendin' trouble on folks like dis

yer? I'se boun' ter be 'shamed on ye. Shovin' off on de Lawd all 'sponsibility f'r our wrongdoin's am de biggest fool-trick ole Giles eber see. I tell yer de Lawd hadn't noth'n' ter do wid it. Him makes folks ter liv', an' Him *means* 'em ter, an' He ain't noth'n' ter gain by spitin' folks, as you saints 'pear ter b'lieve. Him made Pete ter liv'; I'll swar ter dat, suah, f'r dere wa'n't s' cute a little nigger 'roun' as him. Sech a—"

"Oh, hush yer racket, Giles!" entreated Judah. "'Case you an' me b'long ter de sinner-folks we no need ter stomp roun' a-hurtin' saints' feelin's. See, Molly am a-cryin'. All we c'n do or say won't bring 'em back ter life ag'in."

"Mabbe 't 'll be a less'n t' de odder women t' stay an' tak' keer o' de chilluns dat de Lawd done giv' 'em. 'Pears ter me dat am de business f'r modders ter do, mos'ly." So muttering, Giles paced solemnly down the path homeward.

"I'll take Lucindy home with me," said Jinsy. "I c'n tak' keer o' her 's well 's any on ye. An' mabbe de sight ob my chilluns may bring her senses back 'g'in."

Lucinda submitted to be led away. Her eyes had a vacant stare. She looked neither to the right nor the left. She did not reply to the many expressions of sympathy uttered by the women; perhaps she did not hear them. Her senses seemed dead to all that hitherto had made up her joyous life in things around her.

XIII.

"WELCOME UP OR WELCOME BY?"

THE morning broke with the busy cackle of fowls and the singing of birds. Everywhere cat-birds and mocking-birds and crows were calling, making a delightful jubilee.

Uncle Moses was astir with the earliest of the feathered tribe, bending over Sally's pallet with an anxious frown. He lifted a slender dusky hand lying outside, and gently pressed it, but Sally did not respond.

"She 'pears ter breathe reg'lar 'nough, Milly. An' she's limp as a dish-rag. I done reck'n when de sleep wears off she come outen as peart as little Mose ober dar." He drew out his shoemaker's bench and seated himself. "I'se boun' f'r ter mend dis yer pair o' shoes f'r Miss Halle. I seed her yistiddy a-gwine roun' wid odds, an' I felt 'shamed o' myself when she say, as sweet as a peach, 'Ain't ye neber gwine ter mend my shoes, uncle?'"

"I'se boun' ter go ter de house dis blessed morn'n' ter do up her plum 'reserves," serenely answered Mildred. "Dat yer cook she got now dunno no more 'bout mak'n' up sweetmeats dan dat yer chile dar."

"Hi! Mose do snore mighty!" chuckled his father.

Aunt Mildred proceeded to tie a checkered kerchief over her woolly head, totally regardless of the feathers which profusely ornamented it; and when this important part of her toilet was arranged to her liking, and her ample apron assumed, she looked like what she really was—the sleekest, gentlest, best-natured of all the colored matrons of the neighborhood. All the dames were

proud of having been slaves of the "quality," and she owned to her share of this harmless vanity "'nough ter be respe'kable." She "knowed dere wus a heap o' good cooks 'roun' de county, b't she wa'n't 'fraid t' cook side o' any on 'em! An' as f'r fine wash'n'," she could "do up white folks' clo's tell dey shone s' slick yer'd slip up on 'em, Misser Fly!"

"Wall, Milly, you jess say ter Miss Halle dat I done sole one shoe 'ready, an' I 'low f'r t' put de patch on de odder dis morn'n', suah."

"Yer ash-cake 's a-bakin', Moses, an' yer knows whar de skillet hangs, suah?"

"I cert'nly do! Go 'long, ole wooman! yer needn't mind *me*. Give a howdy f'r me t' Miss Halle, d'ye hear?"

"It allers do seem pow'ful good t' go home!" mused Aunt Mildred, as she turned into the big gate and wound around under the peach-trees to the rear, pausing at the kitchen to greet the cook as heartily as if she did not thoroughly "'spise" her culinary efforts.

"I'll jess step up ter de house an' speak ter Miss Halle, an' you, Jule—d'ye hear?—I wants de biggest brass kittle scoured up so 't'll look like goold."

"Hi! what am up now, Aunt Mildred?"

"Yer'll done see, Jule, d'reckly, ef yer'll git de vinegar an' ashes an' go ter scourin' like a good chile."

"Hi! I done knows. Missy had us all outen pick'n de plums yistiddy." Here Jule turned a somersault, putting down the baby to do it, who set up a howl.

"Jule," said Aunt Mildred, severely, "I wus done raised on dis bery plantation, an' I allers hed more manners dan ter go heels ober head 'fore grown ladies."

"Dat yer had!" assented Jule's mother, coming forward, and cuffing indiscriminately right and left. "I

'clar I'se done 'shamed o' you, ye Jule! yer'll neber be a lady, I'se 'fear'd."

"I d' want ter. Dey'm allers cross," sobbed Jule.

An hour later beheld Aunt Mildred the most important person in the kitchen, as she skimmed and stirred the boiling syrup—dripping from her ladle in honey-like consistency—and dropped into it the purple globes, which straightway dyed the mass a rich crimson.

"O Aunt Milly! I must see too! It does smell mighty good!" laughed Miss Halle, running into the kitchen.

"Yis, honey. Yer ma was allers terrible p'tic'lar 'bout her 'reserves," quoth the presiding divinity. "Poun' f'r poun', Mildred, she take keer t' tell me allers, f'r fear I'd f'rgit. An' sech cherries as we 'reserved in de good ole days 'fo' de war! dey sart'in suah would a-melted in yer mouth, honey. No danger ob *dem* a-work'n' an' sp'ilin' an' a-blowin' de kiver off de jar, as some I knowed ob."

"Your preserves never work, Aunt Milly."

"Dat dey don't, honey. Take keer dat yer baby, Jule! I'se l'arned better'n t' eber leave my 'reserves tell dey'm in de jar all kivered up clus.

"I 'member once in ole missus' time we'd jess lifted off ter de h'ath dis bery same big kittle, an' 'twus mos' runnin' ober wid 'serves a-bilin' hot; I wusn't t'inkin' 'out no chilluns bein' 'roun', an' Jake's little pic'niny, who had nob'dy ter mind 'im, 'count his mammy's havin' ter be 'n de field a hoein' corn, he kim a-tumblin' splash inter 't!"

Aunt Mildred made an effective pause; and though all her audience knew the sad story well, the shudder which ran around the little group was as gratifying to the narrator as if the event were recent.

"When I hear that story, aunty, I feel as if I never could taste sweetmeats again," said Miss Halle, covering her face.

The negress laughed. "I *knows* yer'll eat a-plenty ob dis yer, honey. Yer ma t'ought so too, an' she done faint dead away, an' den she cried when sh' come to; deary me, honey, how she'm did cry! B't laws a mussy, chile, sh' got ober it soon."

"An' what dey do wid hit?" asked Jule, who looked a shade whiter than usual.

"Oh, we'se 'bleeged ter throw 't all way, suah! Sech a pity!" Aunt Mildred wiped her glistening cheeks.

"No, no; I don' mean de sass, but Jake's baby," spoke up Jule, impatiently.

"Dey buried 'im dat ebenin' outen dar whar dem two big trees grow t'gedder on de hill yander—de twin-trees, ye know!—dars heaps o' black folks buried dar!"

"I'se done gwine, Aunt Mildred, I is, ter hear de preacher frum Richmon' ter-morrer," quoth Jule, brightening.

"Dem Richmon' preachers be pow'ful high-flyers mos'ly. Moses, he say he don' gre'tly keer ter lissen t' 'em. He don' want suth'n' dat he kin understan'. But ob coorse we all sh'll be dar; 'ligion am 'ligion, no marter what de shape ob de cup am we drink outen."

Here little Mose burst into the kitchen: "Daddy say yer mus' kim ter see Sally; she don' got happy, an' she am a-singin' an' a-tellin' her 'sperience pow'ful. Our Sally hev been ter hebben a-talk'n' t' de Lawd. She c'n talk mighty nigh 's well's de preacher."

"Hear her, mammy?" as they drew near the cabin, which was surrounded with people. "Hi! don' she clip 't? Dar she am singin' now!"

"O good Mass'r, I'll be dar 'n de mornin'!
A-sitt'n' in de kingdom.
No mo' mo'nin', no mo' cryin'!
I've leff all dat behin' f'reber!
When de gin'ral roll is called
I'll be dar, my Lawd, I'll be dar!"

Moses met them with a beaming face. "I knowed dat ole Mass'r would take keer o' His own."

"An' now Sally kin go ter meet'n'," said little Mose, proudly, "f'r she've a *right* ter go dar!"

The sleek, well-dressed man of color seemed out of place amid his humbler hearers, as he sonorously announced his text: "Like a crane I do chatter, like a dove I do mourn. Mine eyes are lifted up to heaven, for I am oppressed. O Lord, undertake for me!"

"The dove, my Christian frien's, is ev'rywhar the symbol of mournin'. There is no voice in nature more plaintive than its saddening cry. Like a dove I do mourn for the sins of my people! Their worldliness, their coldness, their selfishness, their pride, oppresses me, and I lift up mine eyes for help from on high.

"To whom in heaven shall we go for help then? Not to the saints, who have triumphantly crossed the river of Jordan and have been ushered into the glorified presence of the multitude in white raiment; whose sins have been scarlet, but are now as wool? Nay, they are too happy to lend a listening ear to your trouble. They are engaged in singing praises to the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. This mighty world, my frien's, that was nebula in space when the Lord spake, and, behold! with all its wonders of animal and vegetable life, it sprang into being in the little space of six days!

"For that alone, my Christian hearers, you should magnify His name.

"This life, as you are all aware, is a state of constant warfare against evil. But the reward is great and sure. How will it be when you, too, shall put on immortality and be ushered into the presence of Jesus, a world-weary pilgrim of hope?

"There you saints will behold the hosts whose robes shine in the light of God's countenance like fearful lightnings; there you will behold a long table filled with heavenly abundance. No more famishing, my frien's; there is enough and to spare for all. The Father does you the great honor to preside at the feast, and Jesus sits, radiant, at the foot. And oh, hospitable as you all are on earth to your frien's and loved ones, you yet can form no idea here of the welcome which waits for you there.

"The Father says to his well-beloved Son Jesus, whom we delight to worship, 'Ask a blessing, my Son!'

"But Jesus, His face beamin' like the dawn, waves His hand over all, saying only, 'Feast ye, my brethren!'"

Aunt Dinah Peachy was so wrapped in these anticipatory delights that she swayed to and fro on the narrow bench, in some danger of losing her equilibrium.

Aunt Mildred's serene face was lifted, as if her eyes might pierce the roof and behold the glories so graphically described.

"And," quoth Moses to a fellow-saint, as they filed through the low doorway, "he sart'inly do use de bery diction'ry words, jess like the white folks. It makes me *mos'* want ter go ter hebben, ter hear him!"

"An' I s'prised t' hear so—so strong 'bout de inside o' hebben, Brother Robbins. We knowed allers dat de outside was de blue sky 'bove us—o' coorse we know dat

—but 'peared like he'd bin dar on a visit a purpose ter tell we pore uns what was waitin' for us when we done cross Jurdan."

Uncle Moses was turning over in his mind "an oration" on the subject, but he had no opportunity to "put it forth," for they came suddenly on Nancy Bannister, who occupied the path, chatting noisily with Jeff Monroe. As Moses passed her he saw another young man walk quickly toward her, eagerly asking:

"Miss Nancy, is it welcome up or welcome by dis ebenin' ?"

"Oh, welcome up, I reck'n !" replied Nancy, with a toss of her hat.

Being "in service," Nancy's wages were better than those of the field-girls, and she sported feathers and scarlet ribbons, and possessed a general stylishness of appearance, which won for her the appellation of "the belle of Amelia !"

Jeff's countenance fell. "I ruther thought dat yer had tooken me f'r ter see yer home from meet'n', Mis' Nancy ?"

"Ob coorse, Jeff. Both o' you c'n come along, 'n I'll take good keer o' ye both !" she laughed, turning to walk onward. "Let Uncle Moses get a little ahead !"

"Yis. An' one o' we uns'll git ahead, too, I reck'n. I don't dispose t' sheer ladies' comp'ny wid no gen'leman." Jeff's face expressed angry decision.

"P'raps yer mean me, Mr. Monroe ?" suavely interrogated the favored swain, with a derisive smile.

"I reck'n I do, Mr. Twine ! Fus' come fus' sarved, is what I've allers heerd was p'lite. Leas' ways de Richmon' ladies don' 'low b't one gen'leman t' see 'em home."

"Look here, Jeff, ef yer don' hush yer fuss wid yer

imp'lite racket ter dis yer young lady, I'll hev t' larn yer ter. I s'pose yer took consent f'r granted, an' didn't ax her comp'ny."

"Dat am cert'nly so," assented Nancy, in a subdued voice. "But look here, gen'lemen, I don' want no quar'l. Mr. Monroe, I'll s'cuse yer comp'ny, ef yer'll 'low me."

"Oh, sart'in! B't fust I'll settle with Boss Twine, ef yer'll 'low me ter."

Both men were angry now, and they fought furiously, while Nancy ran, panting, to her father's cabin, nor stopped to glance behind her.

"I wus 'bleeged f'r t' be a witness ob de scene," explained Moses to Aunt Mildred, in his most deliberate manner. "It am de curiouses t'ing t' me dat de young men'll be sech fools 'bout a flyaway, no 'count t'ing like Nancy Bannister. She's right peart-look'n', I'll 'low, b't she ain't got a grain mo' sense dan yer old goose out yander."

"Hush now, Moses! What d'ye know 'bout de sense ob young gals? Dem dat 'pears ter be de mos' ob de triflin' sort am of'en de ones dat make de mos' rapid sort ob wimmen. A gal mus' have some grit, or she'm good f'r noth'n'. I wus sort o' triflin' myself when I was young."

Moses laughed slowly. "B't all t'ree dem are church members! Hi! 'pears like dey come down to dis yarth tol'ble spry arter gitt'n cl'ar t' de hebbenly lan'?"

"'Pears, Moses, as ef I neber heerd afore dis ebenin' de way made so bery straight right up to de golden gate." Mildred looked solemnly meditative.

"De church! de church!" echoed Uncle Giles, scornfully. Giles was fond of dropping in for an hour's

chat occasionally. "Allers de church! I don' see 's it makes de leastest diff'runce whether it's sinner-folk or saint. I don' see dat de church 'nstrains one frum ebil! I b'lieves in de Bible, b't not in de church. And dere's a woful reck'nin' a-waitin' f'r some dat don' suspec' it at de jedgment! Hell 'll surely bind 'em in its chains!"

"I missed Sister Lucindy at de meet'n'," softly spoke Mildred, in the pause which followed.

"Po' creetur! po' miz'able creetur! she'll neber hab no mo' sense in dis yer worl'," said Giles, sternly. "B't dar now! I won't go f'r t' add one stroke ter her sorrer. Hell 'll bind her fas' 'nough in its chains, depen' on 't."

"'Pears ter me as ef yer 've no call t' set in jedgmen' on anybody," said Mildred, mildly. "We'd bes' lebe dat t' ole Mass'r Himself."

XIV.

MORE ABOUT MRS. BARSTOW.

The heats of summer had dried the juicy grasses so that Mrs. Malvina carried on her dairying amid difficulties. She rose before the stars were dimmed by the dawn, and finished milking. Sometimes there was butter to be "worked over" or the churning to be accomplished while the coolness of the night lingered.

The stir of her various employments penetrated to the upper room, and awakened in Marian an inexplicable feel-

ing of irritation at losing the dreamy, restful sweetness of these morning hours. The twitter and chirp of the birds in the tree-tops overhead were silenced in the steady tramp of the dasher up and down, until Marian's arms ached in sympathy, and she arose with a feeling of languor never before experienced.

Sharp-sighted Mrs. Malvina at once "tackled the cause," as she phrased it.

"The mortal suz! y' look as peaked as your pen-holder there, Marun. And y' ain't got no more appetite than a dead toad. It's the chills workin' on ye, Marun. They're apt t' run round the edges 'fore they tackle ye in earnest."

"I guess it's the chills," said Marian, surveying the unattractive table, with its dingy square of oilcloth, the smoking corn-pone, the cracked, blue-rimmed dish of fried bacon, swimming in liquid fat, the dried elderberry pie, of a juiceless consistency, whereof one taste sufficed; and vaguely wondering why a pat of fresh butter could not be coaxed from the supplies in the pantry, destined for the nearest market town.

As if reading her thoughts, Simeon looked up quickly.

"Malviny's butter fetches such a good price these days that she's stingy of it to us."

"One never should eat when they're not hungry," quietly replied the weary teacher. "The children bring me berries nearly every day, and I shall find some, no doubt, when I go to school."

"There! I told Sim yesterday, when I soaked up these elderberries, that I was glad they'se the last on 'em. I wanted t' use 'em up 'fore the dewberries come, so they wouldn't be wasted; b't there! I sha'n't dry so many another season. I find we tire on 'em arter a spell. Sis, as soon as your chores is done up you put on

your slat sunbunnit an' go over t' the Wilkins's place, and git some dewberries f'r dinner. Past that south medder where the clover is you'll find 'em as thick as all creation. I'm goin' t' take the cows down there t' feed a spell, an' I c'n help you fill a pail in no time. There! I'd oughter said bucket, I s'pose, bein's I live in V'rginny!"

"On the principle, I s'pose, Malviny, of when you're in Rome do as the Romans do?" As he spoke Simeon reached his long, unwashed, emaciated fingers across the table to Marian's plate, with an apologetic: "Your piece of pie looks lonesome, Miss Stone, an' seein's you don't seem to relish it yourself—"

"Pray take it!" said Marian, hastily, rising and leaving the house.

"She's going across the field t' Jinsy's," said Simeon, watching through the open window, while he munched his pie. "Wall, she looks purty enough, bareheaded, an' she don't seem t' tan, nor freckle, nor burn, no matter how fur she goes in the hot sun. I ain't seen no one else that can stan' it as she does. An' she does c'ntrive so well 'bout fixin' her gowns some way. I wish Stellur Jane could git the hang o' her way."

"Massy to me, Sim Barstow! If you ain't an obsarvin' crittur, then I never saw one. I'll tell ye one thing (as ye don't seem t' know), there's differ'nce in folks. There's differ'nce b'tween a hen and a hawk, and you can't make one inter t' other, nohow you try. B't there! I must be off, or them cows won't give no milk t'-night. I ruther thought I'd hold off a little till the sun dried up the dew, but law suz! I can't seem t' bear t' lose the time. I've wrapped my feet up 's well 's I can in rags, but they're all swelled up and painful, and I didn't ketch scursely a wink o' sleep, they ached so."

"It's so cur'us," quoth Simeon, as he smoothed out Miss Marian's newspaper over his knees, "that the wet grass should make dew-boils on bare feet. I never knew such a thing up North."

"There's *many* a thing that happens here that I never heard of there up in old Onta'," sententiously replied his wife, as she seized her knitting-work and wabbled briskly toward the cow-pen.

Simeon smiled as he heard her summoning her forces like a general: "Come here, Bess! Tilly, you march! Go 'long, Jenny! Keep together! I don't want a run in the wet grass." And away they all marched down the grass-grown road, Mrs. Malvina talking, either to herself or the cows, her flexible lips undergoing strange contortions, and knitting fiercely as she strode along.

Marian, seated at her little desk in the schoolroom writing, also saw her pass, and watched her with serious eyes: "I wish my friend could see her now," she mused; then grew ashamed of herself. "It must be the 'chills a-workin' on me,' as Mrs. Barstow says," she muttered. "I never used to mind things so."

She resumed her letter: "Many of them do not know their right arm from their left, do not know that they have shoulder-blades, nor the location of their spine. We have now a daily drill in the simplest things (which a Northern white child understands without any especial instruction), of which old and young are alike ignorant here. Despite the ludicrous aspect things often take, I am impressed with genuine solemnity of feeling as I watch these tall, gaunt field-hands and the plump, well-mannered house-servants, side by side with the little children, undergoing this drill.

"For instance, if I say how many senses have you?

the entire school reply, 'A heap, I reckon.' But when asked to specify one, they fall a-pondering the matter with such a vacant expression that I hasten to their relief.

"There are some bright faces among the young pupils, and I now teach the older ones in evening schools, thinking it best to separate them in this way. Many can come in the evening, after the daily tasks are done. I am always touched anew with pity at the sight of these poor creatures, fresh from the day's labor, thronging to the schoolhouse at dusk, and eagerly looking up to me, as if with a few magic strokes of my wand I could dispel the dense clouds of ignorance enveloping their brains.

"I told you in my last letter that I was trying to leave the Barstows. But where to go? There are several Southern white families living sufficiently near the schoolhouse, but when I broached the matter to some of my black friends, with one accord they told me it was 'onpossible.' And I myself feel that it is. This feeling of hostility toward the freed slaves acquiring knowledge, and toward myself as connected with the movement, is surprising to me. They should rather be grateful to those who undertake the unthankful task which they ignore or decline.

"I have had my eye for some time on a small tract of land, of perhaps six acres, adjoining Judah Harris's homestead. He tells me he is sure 'de fam'ly 'll be done glad ter sell dat ar' bram'ly lot, f'r 't won't perduce noth'n' b't snags an' snakes an' sassyfa's roots, an' dem sort o' craps ain't de mos' 'nrichin' t' de folks or t' de lan'. Yer knows dat yer, Miss Maryon. Dey'll b' done glad t' git shet o' dat eyesore on de ole plantashun.'

"'And you could help Peter put me up a small house, I suppose—just two rooms or so—a shed, perhaps, I might need?' I inquired.

"'Dat I could. An' I'se mighty glad ob de turn o' yer min' in dat d'rection, Miss Maryon,' the old man added, with a respectful bow.

"Whereupon I authorized him to buy it for me as reasonably as he can. It is conveniently near the school and to Judah's cabin. I can call upon him for protection in case of an emergency. Not that I really expect occasion will arise. I have met with no open manifestation of ill-feeling from any one since the first evening of my arrival.

"I have no feeling of privacy at the Barstows. They break in upon all my attempts at seclusion without a signal cough or knock to prepare me for their approach. With regard to Stella, this is of no consequence; she seldom causes me the least annoyance. But Mrs. Barstow seats herself on the edge of my bedstead, and rattles away with furious energy concerning her many trials—'Sim' being one of the greatest of them—until I put down pen or book, and creep into bed to stop their relation.

"The aforesaid 'Sim,' being restless and sleepless, with a constant cough which is bringing him daily to greater attenuation of figure, takes to midnight readings for solace. I hear him ejaculate testily, 'I do wish, Malviny, you'd leave the matches handy!' as he fumbles around, and then he lights the kerosene lamp and searches for the newspaper. I usually take care to leave it below, ready for these midnight prowlings. Sometimes it chances that I forget to do so, and then I am startled by a vision of his skeleton frame just as he left the friendly cover of his bed, pushing aside the patchwork quilt which is supposed to shield my apartment from invasion. 'I've come t' git the *Trybune!*' he mutters, and seizing it he slowly descends the ladder, his hollow cough ringing out,

as he treads the rungs, with a startling premonition of the end. Clearly I must hasten on my own home-getting. I see it now 'in my mind's eye,' and I long for it."

Mrs. Barstow sat on the top rail of the fence around "the south meddar," knitting and talking to herself. Her swollen and bandaged feet were a frequent theme of her self-pitying observations. Further on, half hidden by the tall bushes, Stella Jane was stooping for the low-running dewberry vines, and filling her pail with the luscious fruit.

"Whoa, whoa! Who told you to turn your cattle loose in my clover?" inquired the angry man, drawing rein in front of the serene matron.

"Who told you I was here, Mr. Wilkins?" she calmly asked in turn. "There! ef I hain't dropped a stitch, and it's b'ginning to run like all possessed. Don't know when I've done sech a trick as that afore," she added to herself, as she bent her eyes diligently to her work.

"Oh, yes, you do! It's a frequent trick of yours to fill your cows up on my clover. I've heard of your doing it before. And now Mr. Meade rode by my place and says, 'You can see her yourself sitting there, and her cattle feeding inside the field, if you care to.' I assure you, Mrs. Barstow, I would scarcely have believed it possible of any one."

"The mortal suz! what is a body to do when the grass is so dried up that noth'n' won't touch t' nibble it? That yearling over there was jest pining f'r some good green grass, an', law! you'll never miss it none, Mr. Wilkins. Be you all 's well 's usual?" She met his eye with a coolness that amazed him.

"Well, we shall see if you've a right to this field or I!" he ejaculated, red in the face, as he dashed away.

"Highty tighty! Well, I guess they've filled up toler'ble well a'ready. Come, Bess!" She let down the rails, and drove them through, and limped after them, muttering: "What's sauce f'r the goose is sauce f'r the gander. It's clear gain all I get out o' them critturs. They wouldn't one on 'em stir t' help me 'f I lay a-dyin'."

When she reached her home she found Stella already relating the incident to her father: "I see ma a-droppin' down from that fence about as lively as ever she stepped. An' the way old Mr. Wilkins ruled it off t' her she won't f'rgit in a hurry."

"There now, Stellur Jane, you shet up your sass. I guess I didn't show fear no great. I wa'n't born in the woods t' be skeered by an owl. All the Wilkinses in ole Virginny can't skeer *me*. All I care 'bout it is that the cows can't ketch no more bites o' that clover, f'r 's I know he'd set his dogs on me 'f they did."

"Wall, Malviny, I'll resk but what ye'll hold yer own with any on 'em," smiled Simeon, grimly eyeing the teacher. "Ye needn't call on me t' help ef it comes t' a pitched battle."

"I know better'n t' do that, Sim Basto," irritably flung back his wife, as she set her poor swollen feet more firmly on the floor and brandished her fists closely to his face. "I ain't f'rgot how you served me when I had that tussle with Dave Binney up in old Onta'. B't law suz! what's the use o' threat'nin' a ghost?" She seemed seized with a species of terror, and suddenly left the room.

"Marun, Marun, be you awake?" she asked, climbing the ladder in the early morning. No answer.

"I know you be, f'r I heerd ye a-sighin' a spell back. Sim says when a gal takes to sighin' it's a sign some one

occupies her thoughts more'n common. B't I tell him, 'No, sir,' you're on the wrong tack there. There ain't nobody t' court her here (wuth havin', I mean), an' mortal suz! ef there'd been any one up North he'd a been loppin' down here a year or two ago.'"

No answer. "Lawful heart, it seems only yesterday sence you come here! time does slip 'long mortal quick.

"Well there! I mus' git 'bout my milkin' 'fore the flies pester me t' death. Flies? I used t' think we had flies up 'n old Onta'—b't there! we never begun t' see flies, I've found out sence I *have* seen 'em here."

"Marun"—bending over her and trying to see her face—"I should think you might tell *me* if you're thinkin' of any one p'rticular. You've known me long 'nough t' know I won't tell nobody—why, the mortal suz!" she exclaimed, with pain or anger, or possibly both, as she clapped both hands before her mouth and stepped backward, confronting the teacher.

Marian had burst into a ringing laugh at the absurdity of the question, and thrown her hands above her head as she straightened herself to meet Mrs. Barstow's gaze of curiosity; in doing so her hands met her hostess' mouth with a resounding blow, which appalled the giver.

"I am so sorry," said Marian, humbly. "I did not think you were so near me. Your question was so funny," and her eyes twinkled, in spite of her endeavor to be serious. "I hope you will forgive an accident."

"'Twa'n't no accident, then, and I won't f'rgive ye!" exclaimed Mrs. Malvina, fiercely, and she advanced, shaking her fist in Marian's face. "Y' did it on purpose, and I've sense enough t' know it. I ain't so dull b't I c'n see through a grin'stun yit, specially if there 's a hole in 't. If I'd a had false teeth in my mouth 'twould

a-knocked 'em all endways. Mabbe y' think I'm goin' t' stand sech treatment, b't ye're mistaken."

"Malviny, Malviny," coughed Simeon from below, "come down here a minute."

"I hain't time now t' tell ye my mind, b't this I'll say, ye must find another home this very day." Mrs. Barstow flung this parting shot at Marian, who, utterly dismayed and bewildered by her violence, stared after her in silence.

She heard her storming below to Simeon, who vainly tried to quiet her wrath: "I guess I sot her down *that* time. I know there ain't another place where she c'n go t' board, 'ceptin' the black folks, and they ain't no place fer sech as her in them little cabins."

"Oh hush, ma! you're too hasty," entreated Stella, in a low tone.

"I tell you there ain't another place she c'n go to, an' she'll have t' give up her school. An' I wanted t' git Stellur Jane's cousin, Semanthy Brown, down here from old Onta'. She's a clipper t' teach, they tell me, an' bein' our folks will be easier t' git along with."

"Oh, hush, ma! Marian 'll hear you."

"Wall, I dunno 's I've the least objection." Out she went, and Marian heard her voice storming at the cattle as she fed and milked them.

"Why not?" the teacher was saying to herself, while dressing and deliberating before descending the ladder. "I will not be made to give up my school. And I can hurry on the purchase of my house better. Yes, I will go."

She glided from the house, while this resolution was fresh in her mind, away across the lonely stretch of pine growth, skirting ghastly rifts in the red clay of the gently rolling uplands, entering at last on the forest path

that led, with many a devious turn, to Uncle Judah's home.

"I 'clar ter goodness, honey, yer mus' hab slep' short ter a-woke up f'r so airly a ramble," laughed Aunt Molly, as she made haste to wipe "a cheer" for her guest.

"First, I want my breakfast," smiled Marian, trying to be gay. "And then I mean to talk business. I want just what you are going to have—a bit of that pone yonder."

"Now, chile, you jess set still. Molly knows what she'm 'bout, I reck'n," said Judah, eyeing her keenly.

"I want to come and live with you," said Marian. "Mrs. Barstow has turned me away."

"Come an' welcome; ob coorse we'd feel honored t' hev ye, ef ye c'n put up wid our fare. I reck'n we kin crowd a little closer an' let Miss Maryon hab de lof' ter hersilf?" said Aunt Molly, quickly. "I don't want our teacher put out by those Basto folks, Judah!"

"An' I've done 'ranged f'r yer farm," laughed Judah. "Ye c'n settle it any day."

"Now for the building, Uncle Judah." And the teacher almost forgot her school in the plans and problems which presented themselves.

XV.

A SUNDAY BREAKFAST.

Aunt Molly Harris was getting a Sunday breakfast. The pan of light bread on the hearth had risen to overflowing; she was kneeling on the bricks and kneading it, with well-directed plunges of her massive fists, until it was a round, hard, springy mass, which she surveyed critically while trying it with a floury forefinger.

The log-cabin shone in Sunday brightness. The poplar floor had been scrubbed the day before, till its whiteness seemed a reproach to a careless footfall.

But, indeed, there were no careless feet in Uncle Judah's cabin. Every pickaninny, from tall Flossy down to little Pete, were trained to respect the Sunday dress of the little home, and to assist in keeping it in order. Besides, as necessary parts of this general neatness, they had all been down to "the Branch" for a weekly ablution. In and out they wandered, getting sniffs at the fragrant corn-dodgers and fizzling bacon, and going off to report to those outside.

So numerous a progeny had Judah that they were commonly found clustering in pairs all over the domain. Sometimes Aunt Molly counted them on her fingers, calling their names over, and doubling under the finger thus checked off before naming its neighbor, to ascertain the exact number belonging to them. And even with this primitive method of notation mistakes would occur—as when she left little Jude out altogether—and the omission caused her kind soul a temporary shock, as of his personal loss.

Besides their own eight living children, their eldest

daughter, dying, had left to their loving care four helpless little ones, who were at once brought home and incorporated with the family. And another daughter, possessing a numerous brood, lived so near that they shared the two homes equally.

A short white curtain, with a border of knotted fringe, made from cotton of Aunt Molly's raising, hung before the little window; its broad sill held boxes filled with black wood-mould, in which lusty plants were growing; a trumpet vine had crept up from the ground beneath and fastened in the low eaves, making a network of leafy shadows, the tubular vine-flowers and pendent seed-pods forming a picturesque arbor.

There were chests, stools, and two shuck-bottomed chairs, all as white as soap could make them. The carefully chinked logs were neatly whitewashed; here and there were pasted newspaper pictures—charges of cavalry, foreign-looking fountains and cathedrals, portraits of political officials and railroad magnates, advertisements of popular medicines—whatever treasure of this sort fell into Aunt Molly's way was eagerly appropriated for home decoration.

A bureau, with brass rings to its drawers, stood in one corner, and over it depended from a nail Aunt Molly's turkey-tail fan. In another corner stood a high post-bedstead with a flowered valence freshly starched and standing stiffly out. The bed was "rale hens' feathers," made up high and round, and covered with a fine white linen sheet for a counterpane: this had a history which Aunt Molly was fond of relating:

"It done b'long ter my missus in slave time, an' was one ob de bery nicest sheets in de great house; dey wasn't none o' yer homespun t'ings, sech as missus used common, but was kep' f'r comp'ny 'casions. But den

de war kim along, an' we'se all freed! I 'member 's if 'twas yistiddy how Mass'r Peyton kim ridin' up on Black Bess, a-stormin', an' ragin', an' sayin' heaps o' swear words, an' ord'rin' all de ole servants what was waitin' roun' ter 'cl'ar out to der frien's, de Yankees!' Ole Moses Robbins, de gard'ner, had de rheumatism mos' pow'ful bad, an' he make sech a racket 'bout leavin' while de dew was a-fall'n'; but no! Mass'r Peyton couldn't abide him nor none de res' till mornin'.

"'I'll hab no free niggers on dis yer plantation not one hour!'

"Sech a sight o' miz'ry 'twas to see 'em totin' off wid bundles an' housen stuff, even de spinnin'-wheels! An' some toted de chillen dat was too young t' walk, and some was laughin' an' singin', an' some was cryin', an' ole Mass'r was a-hurryin' 'em on! 'Pears like he mos' crazy to driv' us all off inter de wilderness! Judah hed ter tote off wid de rest—'bout forty on 'em—an' dat was a mighty cur'us sort o' percession a-hoofin' it to de Yankee lines at Richmon'!

"Well, I hed de miz'ry so I couldn't hol' up my hade! My missus she done come to my cabin t' read de Bible t' me an' t' comfort me. I'd los' my baby, an' Judah was gone f'reber, an' I was frettin' pow'ful 'cause we'se so done broke up. Mos' of us was raised on de ole place. De ole times dey come no mo'! I didn't know no Yankees, b't we'd bin tole so much what dey'd do t' us ef dey eber cotched us. Good gracious me, it makes me laugh now t' think how silly we po' cre'tur's was! b't den we didn't know no better! we'se boun' f'r t' b'lieve our white folks.

"I fretted and cried so much my missus she cried too. 'Why, you can't go, Molly,' she say; 'I need you! De kunnel 'll t'ink diff'runt when he cools off an' 'flects I

can't do de work I wa'n't raised to.' She was so soothin' as mountain tea, an' she fixed up t'ings f'r me t' eat wid her pretty little han's, an' was so good ter me dat I 'signed myself ter stop frettin'.

"An,' sure 'nough, he did fin' out dat Miss Car'line couldn't work like we black women as was raised to 't; he come roun' ter me as soft and sweet as Ingy merlassis, an' say would I please 'scuse him fool words an' stay on ter do f'r dem jess as I used? Nobody could make corn puffs an' pones like Molly, he say, an' he done send word t' Judah t' come back. 'Twas when I was 'spectin' Judah dat Miss Car'line brung me dis yer fine sheet f'r a spread. 'T'will be a little condition ter yer bed,' she say; an', suah 'nough, it did make it look jess like de white folks'."

"She c'd 'ford ter give dat when yer was a-workin' widout wages!" sniffed Uncle Judah. He had a decisive curtness of speech, which amounted, sometimes, to positive rudeness. He was a small, slender figure, with an aristocratic bearing. His hair was grizzled, and stood up in woolly shocks above an intelligent-looking face of an ashy brownness. Though nearly seventy he was alert and springy as a boy in his movements. The ague had never laid its levelling hand upon him; rheumatism and kindred aches passed him by, and sought neighboring cabins for victims. Perhaps the secret of his healthful age lay with his temperate habits. Not a drop of whiskey ever passed Uncle Judah's lips—he did not like the taste. His tobacco crop was always the best in the neighborhood, in a county celebrated for good tobacco, but he "despised" the taste of the weed.

In these respects his wife must be accounted inferior; a toddy, both hot and strong, was always relished, and the Christmas holidays, which ushered in all these

roystering delights, were eagerly anticipated for months. As for the Virginia weed alluded to, a generous "lady's twist" was always beside her red clay Powhatan pipe, on a little shelf by the fireplace.

It was a pleasure to see Aunt Molly smoke; to hear her sturdy puffing, and to watch the wreaths of vapor rising like incense around her turbaned head; then the faded eyes drooped dreamily, and a slumbrous charm descended to lift the weight of years and labor, and annul all other griefs and ills.

It must be added that she also "chewed" the seductive staple, but this was an universal custom among the colored women of her acquaintance, and she would doubtless have lost caste among them had her taste ordained abstemiousness. She was an acknowledged leader among the saints, of fervid piety, and her great grief was that Judah had not been elected "into de kingdom."

Judah was often good-naturedly disdainful of his mild, religious spouse:

"Molly too easy—she let de chillen run right ober her. Dey needs de sassafras switch put on quite lively b'tween meals. Sassafras an' peach am de bitters growin' boys an' girls need. Hey, Luke?"

"Peach switches sting like bees—dat dey do!" whined Luke, with plaintive glances toward his mammy.

"I kin 'tend ter *dat* business as well as ter de craps. I done b'lieve dat I like ter whip better'n I like ter eat!" declared Uncle Judah, in his crispest tones, while his Sunday "stock" seemed to grow more rigidly erect to the row of shining faces solemnly watching him.

"Dis yer am a pow'ful pretty day dat b'gins de tractable meet'n'," remarked Aunt Molly, as she moulded her bread into quartern loaves, and placed them in the well-

greased bake-kettle. After which she raked up a tidy bed of glowing embers, placed the kettle thereon, and heaped live coals on that.

"Mighty nice day! mighty nice! Well, Molly, I'm glad I've done got through thrashin', an' my corn crap 's all laid by! I feel as if I c'n spar' de time as well as anybody. Dat terbaccy in de low ground needs suckerin' some; b't Junius an' Caldonyus an' Luke hev got ter manage dat, meet'n' or no meet'n'!"

"'Pears as if Dony oughter go t' de meet'n'; he's old 'nough t' be a member," began Molly.

"Yes, yes; c'n go some, b't mus' work some too."

Aunt Molly opened the cupboard and proceeded to set the long pine table with her few cherished pieces, chiefly relics of former sets used by her old mistress, and bestowed on this humble servant "to get them out of the way." Setting aside the diversity of styles and colors, the variety of nicks and cracks, and the ingenuity of mending, they made a really artistic show. There were forks with one prong, and of the four knives only one rejoiced in a clumsy handle of horn, which was the exclusive possession of the master of the house. Bright they were as red clay scourings could make them.

A yellow "t'reen" of dewberry "'reserves" flanked the fragrant corn-pones. Aunt Molly paused once by the window to pinch off a rakish-looking sprout of her favorite "fish geranium," all aglow with great trusses of scarlet; she bent tenderly over the citronalis, which flung her the sweetest of greetings.

Uncle Judah took advantage of her preoccupation to slyly rake open an innocent-looking bed of ashes in one corner of the fireplace; a puff of incense floated up which brought Molly swiftly to his side.

Judah softly laughed. "Yer see, Molly, I done go to de tater-patch 'fore yer was up, an' I boun' f'r ter rob de hills o' some dere roots—I boun' f'r to give my ole woman a Sunday s'rprise. Dem red yams is pushin' 'long right smart." He placed the basin of sweet potatoes beside her plate.

"Well, yer cert'nly has, Judah! yer s'rprised me pow'ful! I'd no idee dey was roastin' side my ash-cakes; ef yer'll cut dat big watermilyun I'll take up my light bread."

"Oh mammy, mammy! de hogs am out, an' a-puttin f'r de gearden!" shouted Caladonius, tumbling into the doorway. "Hi! I smell taters—I cert'nly do! Good Jurdan, but dat am a peart milyun!"

"Dony," queried his mammy, with the severest look she could assume on such a happy morning, "I dunno why yer am boun' f'r t' 'flict yer ole mammy so? I'se tole yer so often 'bout usin' swear-words, eber sence you'se born!"

"Why, 'tain't cussin' ter say, 'Good Jurdan!'" Dony's eyes grew big with surprise.

"It's de name ob de sacred riber, chile! We hab ter cross Jurdan 'fore we done enter de kingdom. We mus' speak 'speckful ob sech t'ings as we can't see till our time comes!" mournfully sighed his mother.

"I tell yer now, you fin' Junius an' Luke—dar dey be under de gum-tree—an' you boys bring dem hogs in mighty quick!" crisply ordered his father. "I jess 's soon take down dat strap on Sunday as any oder day!" But Dony had sped long before this brief soliloquy was finished.

"I done hab a feelin', Judah, dat some great blessin' comin' ter dis yer tractable meet'n'," serenely pursued Aunt Molly. "De signs am all right f'r it," she added,

with a mysterious nod of her yellow turban. "I'se been a-watchin' all de pas' month!"

"Tell ye what, Molly, de signs is dat onless I git a new padlock on our sullar-door we sh'll be mighty short o' bacon bam-bye!" shortly interjected her practical husband. "I done see de signs, too. One on 'em 's dat miz'rable no 'count Brutus, what used ter work down ter Mattoax, he's moved over on Jones's trac', an' mighty sorry I be. Dey done brake inter Mose Robbins's sullar, an' took all dey wanted! Dey jess scooped out de lard from de bucket wid der han's—I see it as 'twas left, all dirty an' streaked—an' toted off a shoulder an' two jowls!

"Yis, an' de 'pinion am gin'rally dat de nigger dat stuck dat yer hog in young Mr. Percy's hog lot de oder night kin be foun' on de bery same premises ober to Jones's!" Judah could be oracular, also, as well as his wife.

"I done b'lieve Brutus am a member o' Bethiah Church," slowly meditated Aunt Molly.

"Don' car' 'f he be; don' car' 'f he b'longs ter forty churches! When dar's lard an' bacon in de way churches don't stan' no show a' tall. Molly, preach'n' am well 'nough 'f dere's practice ter foller. Glad I ain't no member! Nobody need t' lock up dere meat nor flour ter keep me outen 'em! Ef I j'ined de saints dar 's no tellin' what I'd come ter, suah!"

Aunt Molly meekly poured herself a cup of coffee without replying. She was accustomed to Judah's denunciation of "the saints;" being a good woman herself she knew there was too much reason for his raillery.

Religion to these ignorant blacks does not mean a spiritual force whereby they are lifted to a nobler conception of life and its daily duties; their moral natures

remain unstrengthened. To escape hell in the hereafter, whither all are tending, and looked forward to with unspeakable dread, they must come through an intense emotional experience, after which they are saved from all consequences of sin, either past or prospective.

As the morning hours wore away, and the sun silvered the graceful branches of a witch-elm in the neatly swept yard, Uncle Judah rose, saying, "Don' want ter hurry ye none, Molly, b't I see the grove is all alive wid folks —all alive. De chillen don' went off some time ago."

Out into the pleasant yard, among strutting turkeys, noisy guinea-fowl, and sober hens scratching busily for their hungry broods. Some tame pigeons came swooping down from the ridgepole, and alighted at Aunt Molly's feet, mutely beseeching feeding. Folly and Fash lifted their canine heads, and eyed the aged pair with wistful yelps, as they slowly disappeared past the spreading witch-elm, with its knobby and lichen-like branches; past the majestic sweet-gums and tulip-trees; past the garden paling, with a cluster of low-branched peach-trees to one side, and into the forest, seamed with interlacing paths leading to well-known friends and neighbors.

There is nothing quite so alluring in Virginia as a forest in a thickly-settled neighborhood. Majestic oaks that have weathered the storms for centuries, spreading their giant arms as if to shield their younger and tenderer brethren, alike from midsummer heats and winter blasts; the shining leaves of the poplar and the silvery shimmer of the aspen catching the eye of the roamer through the well-trodden paths; the countless shrubs in flower or fruitage, from the graceful fringe tree to the bristling chinquapin; and the brilliant hues of the wild flowers which nestle beside the tree roots.

Listen to the hammering notes of woodpeckers echoing down the leafy aisles! A moment spare for the friendly chattering call of innumerable thrushes, so fearless that they flit before your face and alight on the nearest twigs. The air is vocal with insect and bird life, and over all, supreme, away up on the uppermost bough of a venerable oak, sways a mocking-bird, his liquid, various notes filtering down to us through the warm sunshine.

And now there are human voices mingling with these others—cheerful laughter and confidential chatter, and a band of brother members singing. The vista has widened into "Pleasant Grove," a church in its midst, built of logs—a long and low structure with doors at each end. Women are grouped here and there, arrayed in every color—the styles of costume are original and odd—but every face wears a joyous greeting to these newcomers.

The singing rises into a loud chant:

"Ole Satan got one iron shoe, iron shoe!
Ef yer don't look out he'll put it on you!"

The chorus was taken up by the whole body with tremendous vigor:

"O giv' way, Jurdan! giv' way, Jurdan!
I want ter come across f'r ter see my Lord!
Ole Satan like one hunter dog,
He'll hunt yer right straight home ter God!
O giv' way, Jurdan! giv' way, Jurdan!
I want ter come across f'r ter see my Lord.
Ole Satan like one sly ole coon,
Him boun' ter dodge yer grip too soon!
O giv' way, Jurdan! giv' way, Jurdan!
I want ter come across ter see my Lord!
Ole Satan am de bery debil
Ter temp' yer toward ways ob evil!
O giv' way, Jurdan! giv' way, Jurdan!
I want ter come across ter see my Lord!"

XVI.

THE "TRACTABLE MEETIN'."

"WELL, Sister Molly, dar comes de preacher. I reck'n we'd better b' gwine inter de house," said Dinah Peachy. "Cesar he druv ober ter Powhatan Station ter brung him in. I tell Cesar he done f'rgot ter sleep a wink las' night f'r fear him wouldn't rouse up *soon* dis yer sun-up." She laughed cheerily as she nodded to arriving friends.

Inside were two long rows of seats; hickory logs sawn of a proper height, with smooth boards laid thereon, formed the benches. The entering men filed toward the right row and the sisters to the left. The four deacons sat on a bench underneath the pulpit and facing the congregation.

The "members"—otherwise self-styled "the saints"—were privileged to occupy the front benches, while the younger people and the "sinner-folks" fell to the rear.

With an effusive prayer the meeting opened. A short sermon followed, but the preacher had not yet wound himself to his highest pitch. He ended by giving out a hymn, one line at a time, which was sung with swaying motions of the body and incessant hand shakings. Then another line was read, and sung and emphasized with shaking of each other's hands, and so on unto the close.

Then a sort of benediction was spoken, the singers murmuring a chant, accompanied by a steady patting of their feet on the floor. It grew faster and more monotonous, and loud clapping of hands broke the rhythm:

"New-born baby! born again!
New-born baby! born again!

Born in de mangel o' Bethelem!
New-born baby! new-born baby!
New-born baby! born again!"

Swifter went the strain, and the singers rose to their feet. One after another of the sister-saints began to sway and bend to the music, and in an incredibly short time the entire congregation, both women and men, were dancing and shouting to the solemn strain:

"New-born baby! new-born baby! born again!
Born in de mangel o' Bethelem!"

What subtle power lurked in those simple words it were hard to say; the swaying motion increased; they bent forward, as if stooping to pick something from the floor; recovering, with a springy jerk they inclined to the right, to the left, and backward; they turned around, and saluted without appearing to see each other—their faces solemn, their eyes downcast, as if under a spell.

Suddenly arose a clapping of hands and ejaculations, "Hi! hi!" in sharp, crisp tones. The measured tread of feet broke into a concerted step—a sort of jump and rebound. Here and there, amid the swaying throng, were women who had "got happy;" who, in fact, appeared oblivious of every earthly surrounding. Aunt Molly was one of these. In spite of age and fleshly weights she went springing up and down the circle with the agility of youth.

"When de Lawd gits hold o' us we're boun' f'r ter shout an' praise Him!" shouted Dinah Peachy, at the same time endeavoring to moderate her spiritual sister's excessive gyrations, even throwing her fat arms impulsively around her.

But Molly neither heard nor heeded; she neither panted, nor spoke, nor appeared to breathe. In and out

of the mysterious evolutions she writhed and jumped and twisted, while Judah stood in the rear, among the sinner-folk, watching, with ill-concealed pride, the saintly achievements of his spouse.

But suddenly her motion slackens, her turkey-tail fan falls to the floor, her eyes have closed in apparent sleep, and she suddenly falls backward like a log, knocking poor Aunt Dinah far out of the circle of revolving forms. Two of the deacons lift Aunt Molly and bear her to a bench by the rear door, where awaiting sisters fan her, and wipe her forehead, and watch her complete recovery. Aunt Molly has "fallen out."

Uncle Judah does not stir from the doorway, yet he sees all this, and exults, and inwardly says: "Molly done hab de pow'r o' de sperit mighty hard! Molly suah am allers ready f'r ter praise de Lawd!"

But now the singing ceases, only to take an entirely different measure:

"Befo' I'd be a slave,
I'd be buried in de grave,
An' g' home ter my Father ter be free!"

shouts Cesar Peachy, the entire body repeating the words in chorus, with shoutings and clappings and jumpings:

"Oh, Jurdan it am deep!
Oh, Sinay it am steep!
But ole Mas'er am boun' ter set us free!
Him 'bleeged ter set us free, set us free!
Ole Mass'r from hell 'll set us free!"

While all this excitement and fervor was spending itself in a fearful uproar within the church, the grove was peopled with merry groups enjoying their luncheon. The preacher sauntered up to one of these groups, begging for a "sheer" of their "good t'ings." With

many laughing jests the baskets were freely opened unto him.

The noon sped, and it was eventide.

"The time is passin', an' yer souls are perishin', my friends!" The preacher solemnly wiped his mouth on a sweet gum leaf. "We hab work ter do dis yer ebenin'. De Lawd'll smite us, hip an' thigh, ef we lets dis yer precious day go by widout bringin' one po' soul inter de kingdom!"

Groans from various saints, and cries, "Dat's so; we're 'bleeged f'r ter work, suah!"

"We mus' 'umbel ourselfs befo' de Lawd!" declared the preacher. "We mus' hav' de 'umbility of sheeps, ef we 'spects f'r ter brung de bless'n' down! Oh, my po' sinner-folks a-sittin' an' a-standin' ober dar by de do', what does yer 'spect f'r ter do when Jesus kims through dat yer do'? Oh yes, my po' frien's, He's comin', suah! He's boun' f'r t' come, H's 'bleeged f'r ter come—I know He'll come! Whar two, an' leastways whar three, am gathered togedder, dere He says He boun' f'r t' be! An' Him done come now, 'cordin' t' His Word! I feel His presence dis mortal minute. Sister Harris ober dere she feels His presence—"

"Dat I does!" vociferated Aunt Molly, plaintively.

"Brother Peachy an' Brother Jones dey done feel His presence! de saints, ev'n down to de lowes' one, done feel His presence! An' some o' ye—mighty po' creetur's ye be!—am a trifle weaker dan yer used f'r ter be, an' you am de bery ones dat oughten ter feel His presence! We none o' us need ter be 'shamed o' our Jesus!"

"Bress de Lawd! I ain't 'shamed o' Him!" shouted Aunt Dinah, rising and shaking her hands toward the preacher.

"No, you ain't, sister," he assented, swiftly. His voice had been gradually rising, and now, strung to its highest pitch, he poured forth a torrent of denunciations:

"Oh, yer po' quiv'rin' lam'! Yer timid an' trus'ful little creetur as is 'fraid f'r ter leave yer mother's shelt'rin' arms! What am yer boun' f'r ter do when de resumrecshun draws nigh, an' yer can't put off de jedgmen' no longer? Yer's got ter stan' in dat awful presence, an' yer mammy'll hab 'nough ter do a-tendin' ter her own 'count; no mammy 'll shelter ye in dat day ob wrath!

"An' you, ole man, a-tremblin' on de bery varge o' time, what *you* a-gwine f'r ter do when de lamp runs cl'ar down, an' yer little breath is sniffed out like a candle? Won't yer wish f'r de rocks ter crash down an' hide yer miz'ble shame? Sooner or later, po' sinner, ye's boun' f'r ter stan' in His presence! It may be dis bery night dat yer soul 'll be acquired o' ye! 'Twon't do f'r ter say, 'Oh, I done hab my craps ter see to, Lawd! I had no time ter waste!' Sech a frettin' roun' ter fin' 'scuses ter bring dat'll prove 'ceptable ter Jesus, as dere'll be in dat day!"

"I done suah dat fool 'scuses dey'll be!" said Aunt Mildred Robbins, getting up in her excitement and sermonizing to those immediately surrounding her.

"An' it's so easy ter do, po' los' sinner—so easy ter jess come inside de kingdom! Why, dere's death's racket a-ragin' roun' eberywhar b't in God's kingdom, an' de worl' is a-crumblin' t' atoms, an' de graves a-givin' up der dead, an' inside de bless'd kingdom am de saints, as calm an' easy, widout a single car'. F'r why, oh sinner? Why, they've done got home! An' dere sits de bless'd Saviour a-reachin' out f'r ter draw ye

all up likewise. An' you *won't* go f'r ter take hold o' dat yer bless'd han' !"

Groanings and subdued exclamations, which rise into an indistinguishable roar.

"It's so pow'ful easy ter b'lieve an' be saved fr'm de eberlastin' burnin', an' so pow'ful hard t' be lost. D'ye know what it means ter be lost ? Maybe y've strayed a right smart piece fr'm hom' sometime, some on ye, an' got into some wild woodland, where dere wa'n't no paths leadin' ter der neighbors' housen ; maybe de night done fall, an' yer human heart felt a flutter o' dread, not knowin' what de morn'n' might bring. B't what is it t' be lost in de trackless waste impared to de deep d'struction ob yer soul's life in de wastes ob hell ?"

Groanings and excited mutterings on every side. The singing band began a mournful wail, over which the preacher's voice rose strident : "T'ink ob it as y' stan' dere on de bery brink ! Y' can't see it now, b't y're boun' ter feel it bery soon. I am de preacher ob God's Word revealed to all His chillen, an' I must tell yer de bitter truf—"

"Oh, what yer gwine ter do when de lamp burns down ?
De lamp boun' t' burn down mighty soon !
What yer gwine ter do, po' sinner, say !
Eat not de honey, drink not de wine !
Yer lamp 'll burn down ! pray, po' sinner, pray !
Oh, what yer gwine ter do in de jedgment day ?
Ole Master a-waitin by de do' dar !
Welcome Him, sinner ! Him trabel far
T' bless dis mo'nin' time,
Dis glor'us mo'nin' time !
Oh, pray, kneel an' pray, po' sinner, pray !"

This appeal from the singing band of brothers, reiterated in a mournful tune, while the shrill tones of the preacher surged over all, had the desired effect. A

dozen youngish people rose, with downcast eyes, and went forward and took "the mourners' seat."

Still the loud tones and the mournful chant mingled with occasional remarks from earnest "members" as "Glad ter see Sister Sally's chillen a-mournin' !" "Bress de Lawd, dat sinner Jake am a-mournin' at las' !"

Slowly, to the surprise of every one, Uncle Judah went down between the rows of upturned faces and took a mourning-seat.

The sisters who were nearest Aunt Molly grasped her hand with many hearty congratulations.

"De Lawd am marciful t' me !" she responded, with a stately dignity a duchess might have envied. "I knowed afore I come dat de signs wa'n't sent f'r nothin'."

"Dat dey wa'n't, sister ; de signs boun' f'r t' come true."

The sun set, red as blood. The parched plants drooped to the still heated earth, vainly awaiting refreshing dews. Whippoorwills came out of their lurking-places, and sang their one note in maddening iterations. Cicadas lazily droned in countless numbers, sounding like a continuous hum. Young quail scurried in and out of rustling grasses, secure in the slow approach of night. Timorous hares ventured forth, leaping over the red clover, in search of their evening meal. Mosquitoes warmed into aggressive life, and awoke to a conception of the real duties of their brief existence ; their torturing hum chimed in with the cricket's "cheep," the bullfrog's croak, and seemed a not ungentle companion of the myriads of flitting fireflies, gleaming, like tiny stars, among the trees.

Cattle lowed in pine pastures, spurning the languid broom-grasses, in silent wonder at the prolonged absence

of their milkers. And one by one the starry constellations burned to an intense brilliance, as only August stars can shine in the unclouded depths of this Southern sky.

The roaring sound of feet and voices ceased at last in Pleasant Grove, and the tired people went to a well-earned rest.

XVII.

HOW UNCLE JUDAH "CAME THROUGH."

Several days passed, each an exact transcript of its predecessor. Every day numbers of the mourners "came through," and entered into their new inheritance, leaping suddenly to their feet to join in the exulting shouts of the brethren. None of the "sinner-folk" were suffered to join in any of the exercises.

Uncle Judah lingered with the mourners, and his figure grew to wear a sort of funereal sadness. His face became of an ashen hue, the lines intensified, the eyes dull and hopeless. Even his abundant woolly hair appeared to have lost its vitality—no longer erect and defiant, but unmistakably depressed and drooping.

Every one sorrowed with him. Some silently offered little attentions and courtesies, which he scarcely heeded. Some prayed with him and for him alone in the forest thickets, and the birds sang soft interludes to the agonized petitions, which ascended from Judah as a duty, but in no sense a hope that fulfilment would follow.

These brethren, older in the Christian life, followed up

his trembling fears, reasoning and explaining with a patient persistence touching to witness.

One of these earnest "laborers in the vineyard" was Uncle Cesar Peachy.

"Jess say ter Jesus, 'Here I be! I'm ole Judah! I want ter go t' heaben wid de res'! I got nuff'n' ter giv' ye back b't jess dis yer po' ole black mourner, dat's wuth nuff'n' at all!'"

"B't I *can't* say 't," gasped the old man, honest to the very verge of being (as he thought) shut out, in consequence, from heaven. "'Pears as ef a heavy han' was laid on me, a-crashin' all de sperit outen me! I done wants ter look up, but I dunno how ter shake off dat han'! Do *you* know how, Cesar?"

By way of reply Uncle Cesar proceeded to relate his own experience:

"Yer see, Judah, I was hemmed up jess as you be. I couldn't seem ter get cl'ar. Night an' day I couldn't sleep nor eat. An' po' Dinah she fret wid me! She sech a famous cook, an' she fix up more t'ings ter tempt dis ole mourner ter eat dan Satan eber fix up for me ter do when I was a sinner, an' 'clined toward ebil ways. But I couldn't taste de Gumbo, nor de Brunswick stew, nor de wafflers, nor de fried chick'n; an' when a nigger goes agin fried chick'n, 'tis a suah sign dat him mind is ser'usly diskiltered! Wall, Dinah ain't no angel, b't she done cook like one dat yer time, suah!

"I lay out on de kyart mos'ly o' nights, so 's I c'ld be nearer to de stars. 'Pears all de comfort I got was in seein' God's worl' 's an inflecti'n on His goodness. Yer see, I knowed He was good, b't I was so pow'ful hemmed up I couldn't praise Him. One night I suddenly see His char'ot wheels a-flamin' in de sky. I cried out, I so skeered, an' Dinah she kim a-rushin' out, say-

in', 'What is it, Cesar?' I p'inted up. 'Dar's de Lawd in de air a-callin' me!' I say. An', suah 'nough, I heerd Him—mighty nigh like distant thunder—a-callin', 'Cesar, Cesar, why ling'res' thou?'"

Judah had roused into an attitude of deep attention. "An' what den?" he hoarsely whispered, as if awe-stricken.

"Why, I answered, 'Yere am I, Lawd!' an' Dinah she say dat my voice soun' like a silber trumpet, so high and cl'ar. An' I was sudden tooken wid a d'sire f'r ter praise Him, an' tell His grace. An' I put out straight f'r Brother Mose's cabin at midnight, an' I call aloud an' tell what de Lawd hab done f'r me. An' dey all got up ter hear an' pray. I went ter eb'ry cabin f'r three mile roun'! Some dey scoff (but dey was sinner-folks), an' dat didn't make no diff'runce—I tole saints an' sinners alike. An' 'pears like ole Cesar's life ain't long 'nough f'r t' praise Him, b't I'se boun' ter use eb'ry minute!"

"Oh, if I might behold His glory like dat!" sighed Judah.

"Yer will, Judah! Or, if 'tain't 'zackly like dat, 'twill be jess as good a way." Cesar's voice and manner were inexpressibly soothing to the weary man. He went on:

"I tell you what I t'ink 'bout yer case: yer am a pow'ful strong man, yer know, eb'ry way; maybe our preacher ain't strong 'nough by hisself ter brung yer through; leastways we've done got a preacher from Mount Olive Church ter help us t'-morrer, an' I hes faith t' b'lieve ye'll get outen de darkness inter de light."

Giles, also, in a neighborly spirit, brought balm:—"Judah, I done wish y'd quit a tryin'. Ef yer 'll 'tend t' yer dooty in dis worl' I'll b' boun' t' resk yer in de odder. I dunno what yer wants t' change fur."

The morrow brought the Mount Olive preacher—a large, powerful-looking negro of an inky blackness. The people assembled at an early hour. It was Saturday, and the last day of the "tractable meeting." Such of the mourners who failed to experience the needful emotions on this day and evening were left over to the succeeding year's meeting, and then wrestled with and fought for anew. In some mysterious manner the impression had gone abroad that the Lord would show forth marvellous things that day.

As usual, the sermon, with its terrible and fiery warning, increased that heavy weight of which poor Uncle Judah complained. His eyes stealthily dwelt on the new preacher's face; Aunt Molly's eyes steadily watched Judah's.

In the middle of the sermon sounded the rumble of thunder. A flash of lightning startled the people; they crouched closer together.

"D'ye hear Him a-speakin' now? Dat voice is a-callin these sinners t' appear befo' His jedgment-seat! D'ye see de flash ob His eye? He's angry wid de sinner eb'ry day! Whar, oh tell me whar ye'll be, when de sun goes down neber mo' t' rise?"

The singers began a dreamy chanting, accompanied by the steady patting of feet, keeping time.

"Oh, de sun done rise t' set no mo'!
De sun done rise t' set no mo'!
Upon dat resumrection day."

"Who knoweth de day o' jedgment?" thundered the Mount Olive preacher. "This may be de summons, it may come now! Seize de las' chance!"

"Michael done struck de dividin' line
Straight fr'm east to west,
Sheep on de right han', goats on de lef'!"

sang the band of brothers; and the multitude took up the strain, like an army marching to battle:

"De sun done rise t' set no mo'!
T' set no mo'! t' set no mo'!
Ole Josh he bring de son ob Nun,
He ask good Lord t' stop de sun.
De sun stood still 'bout one half hour,
An' de moon ran away ter Gabian.
Oh, de sun done rise ter set no mo'!
T' set no mo'! t' set no mo'! t' set no mo'!
Oh, let my brudder go free, my Lord,
Upon dat glor'us morn!
Oh, let my sister go free, my Lord,
Upon dat glor'us morn!"

"Dar am a few miz'rable souls lef' yere at de fut ob de altar, an' I can't b'ar ter giv' 'em up yit," wailed the preacher, in anguished accents, which spoke powerfully to every heart. "Come, frien's, one an' all, an' j'ine now wid me ter rassle f'r dese yer po' mo'ners, special'y fur Junius Epps. Him done suah bin a hard nut allers, a-playin' wid de adversary all his days. We all knows him's a bran' mos' done burnt up. If de debil done git anoder holt on 'im de gate ob eberlastin' mercy 'll done shut f'reber. Oh, spar' dis yer one fr'm de flames! No mo' hog-stickin', no mo' fightin', nor—nor *gleanin'* in odder folk's shocks o' wheat or corn.

"O Lawd!"—rising to his feet with a tremendous shout of appeal—"make dis yer wicked sinner a shinin' lamp f'r oder perish'n' souls. Oh, his hard heart suah had oughter melt when he 'flec' on de Lam' dat wus slain jess f'r him; innocent He gave Hisself f'r de guilty. Him not 'bleeged ter do dat, Junius. Him scorn ter lebe de country when He knew de heatheners wus seek'n' f'r ter slay Him. Him suah do love de po'

perish'n' sinner. An' why won't yer kneel f'r life at de feet dat stayed dere journey so 's you might live f'reber? He holds de gate ob heaben wide open, an' says, 'Come through! come through! Lo! de daylight am pass'n', an' de night 's at han'!'"

At this point Junius sprang into the air, and alighting on his feet began to jump and shout, while great tears dropped from his eyes, and his hands were seized and shaken from all sides of him.

"Brudder Junius giv' de adversary de slip dat time," smiled the preacher, rejoicingly, amid the chanting:

> "De downward road am crowded, am crowded;
> Oh, suah 'nough, dat road am crowded,
> An' sinner-folks slip inter hell."

"I declar'," ejaculated Cesar, wiping his streaming face, "'for' Judah Harris sh'll go down t' that dreadful place I'll stay here all night a-fighting' f'r his soul, dat I will!"

The rain descended in torrents. The thunder crashed short and sharp directly overhead. The lightning (regarded by them as literally flashings of His eye) revealed the terror seated on every dusky countenance. A huge tree in the grove fell crashing to the ground.

And in the pauses of the thunder peals wove strangely weird fancies of the "resumrecshun hymn," with its mournful cadence:

> "The sun done rise t' set no mo',
> T' set no mo', t' set no mo'!"

The tirade of the preacher ended. "Let us shout ter His praise an' sing de hymn called 'Glory,'" shouted he in intense excitement. "I'll line it f'r ye."

> "We sh'll see a light appear,
> By an' by when He comes.

We sh'll see Him full an' cla'r,
By an' by when He comes.
Ride on, Master, oh, ride on!
We're on our journey home.
Lion ob Judah, come! Lion ob Judah, come,
T' brung dese mo'ners home!"

The hand-shakings became a series of electric jerks as the entire body swayed to the rhythm, and shouted rather than sang.

And what is this remarkable evolution? The hands are quickly uplifted as if clutching at some unseen fabric. They are "pulling a rope to heaben" and apparently intent on reaching the happy portal.

The hymn urges them to renewed efforts, as the thunder peals louder than ever. A sunset gloom has replaced the light of midday.

"Lion ob Judah, come! Lion ob Judah, come,
Hasten ter brung us home!"

sang the people.

And now occurred a marvel. At the first mention of his name Uncle Judah, who looked as if his poor wits were utterly confused under the pressure of so much prayer and song, rose to his feet, his eyes glistening with expectation.

And now, as the singers called it anew, with frantic pullings at the imaginary rope, Judah gave a mighty bound into the circle, shouting:

"Here I is, Lawd! Here's old Judah!"

The thunder, the singing, the shouting, the clapping of hands, and sound of shuffling feet mingled indiscriminately; and over and above the uproar could be distinguished Uncle Judah's resonant tones, crying, "Glory! glory! glory!"

Never before had Uncle Judah's voice been uplifted

in song. But now it seemed as if this strange experience had revealed to him the capacity for musical expression. Exultantly he shouted with the rest:

"Then shall blaze earth's funiral pyre,
By an' by when He comes.
We sh'll shout above de fire
By an' by when He comes.
O Lion ob Judah, come! Lion ob Judah, come
T' brung us home!"

Then, with the rain still falling in a gentle shower promising a speedy cessation, Judah started for the door, without waiting to find his hat, so eager was he to "spread de glad tidin's" abroad, to proclaim "on de housen tops" the wonderful change that had befallen himself. Before he could take food or seek any rest he must make a circuit of the neighborhood, pausing at every door to "talk religion." There was no doubt whatever but that Uncle Judah had "*come* through."

"It done take de thunder an' de lightnin' t' fotch him, dough," said Cesar to Aunt Dinah, as they went homeward.

"It did so," she assented, laughing softly. "What a leap dat was, Cesar! mus' hab sprung mighty nigh four feet, I reck'n."

"But," she added, after a thoughtful pause, "when de Lawd gits hold on us we're boun' ter jump."

XVIII.

"THEM DOCTORS."

"WALL, Miss Stone, Malviny sed as how she'd be 'bleeged if you could make it handy to set up with Stellur Jane t'-night. To tell the truth, we're purty near wore out. I ain't no great at nursing at no time, and 't seems as if my cough was wuss'n ever this fall. I wheeze so 'f I stir roun' much that I reely ain't good f'r noth'n'."

"Tell your wife, Mr. Barstow, I shall be glad to come and help her. And here is this week's paper, which you have not read."

"Thankee, gre'tly. It's about all the comfort I have, Miss Stone, is the reading you furnish me."

Simeon tried to smile at this frank avowal, but his pinched and weazened features had taken on an excess of misery during the past weeks, and to the teacher watching him, his smile was as sad as tears would have been.

Unconsciously her voice grew soft and tender. "I did not know that Stella was so low. I heard from the colored people that she was 'ailing a little.'"

"She's a-been a-runnin' down all the fall. Seemed to be aguish f'r a spell, and then a sorter low fever laid holt o' her, and now it's run into the typhoid form, so the doctor says. Well, there, Miss Stone, you know I don't think no gre't of doctors in general, and if you want to know what my opinion is of this one in p'rticular—but I guess you'll find that out from Malviny."

"I think you ought to have told me sooner about Stella," said the teacher, looking grave.

"Oh, wall, I didn't see as there's any use o' troublin'

you. I don't expect she'll pull through." He stood a moment in silence, as if uncertain what more to say.

"Wall, she's the last on 'em—the girls, I mean. It looks as lonesome at home as if she's already gone. What a likely little place you're a-gittin' here, Miss Stone. I never see anything so changed as this land has in a couple of years," and he strode away, leaving Miss Marian much saddened.

She was not long in following him. The sick girl had been brought below, and she occupied Simeon's bed, in its quilt-protected corner. By the stove, at one end of the room, Mrs. Barstow was preparing supper, and the fumes of some savory cookery floated out as a greeting to Marian.

"The mortal suz, Marun! I told Sim I knowed you'd come over. I've been broke o' my rest s' much I'm pretty near used up, and Sim, too; he's stuck it out nobly. I'll say *that* f' him." She sighed profoundly.

"I guess Stellur Jane is as much my child as your'n, Malviny," began Simeon, with a reproachful look, which was entirely lost upon his wife, she being occupied in explaining the peculiar details of her daughter's illness:

"An' there! Marun, I wouldn't give a pint o' beech nuts f'r all the doctors in Virginny, if this Dr. Garland is a good sample on 'em. Ketch 'em up 'n old Onta' a-rakin' down the blue mass by the pint when anythin' ails a body. They b'lieve there in buildin' up instead of destroyin' what little life 's left. Why, Marun, it's enough t' kill a well person t' carry round that pizen stuff a-fermentin' inside."

"I reck'n 'f I t'ought dat de doctor wa'n't a-doin' no good ter my chile I shouldn't be ravin' roun' a-gittin' him here in de middle ob de night!" ejaculated Jinsy,

with some appearance of indignation, as she slowly waved the cedar bough to and fro over the bed to drive away the flies.

Mrs. Barstow reflected: "Wall, I've heerd Sim say that when yer hoss was runnin' away down hill 'twa'n't no time t' jump out the waggin. An' I can't let sis die without some doctor, good or bad, t' take the r'sponsibility. Well there! I never had no luck raisin' girls, nohow."

"Dr. Garl'n' done come," interrupted Jinsy. "I seed him ride by de winder. An' anoder one wid him."

"He hitches, himself," sighed Mrs. Barstow. "He looked so beat when I went out and offered t' hitch f'r him one day that I never offered to ag'in. The mortal suz! I was in sech a hurry t' git him a-doct'rin' sis I'd a-blacked his boots ef he'd a made tracks any faster. But there! they don't know how t' hurry in this country. All their ways are so tormented slow. But there! it's the way they're raised, I s'pose, and I don't feel t' blame 'em f'r what they can't help."

Simeon smiled grimly, as he opened the door and bade the doctors enter.

"I have brought my friend, Dr. Failem, for counsel," and Dr. Garland courteously grasped Simeon's attenuated fingers.

"The lawful suz!" sighed Mrs. Barstow, plaintively, as she softly laid one hard hand on her daughter's tangled locks. "'Twon't do no good. She's laid like that—kinder stupid-like—ever sence you left this mornin'."

"M', m'," murmured the "counsel," after an attentive examination. And the two disciples of Galen withdrew to the furthest corner. Mrs. Malvina strained her

ears to listen to the whispered consultation which followed. "It's kill or cure, as you say," she caught, and not an additional word.

"I don't want you to give my daughter calomel, doctor," said Simeon, firmly, as they returned to the bedside of their patient. "Dr. Garland will tell you that I have been very decided ag'inst her takin' that. I want to repeat it to you—"

"Oh no, no, my dear sir! Of course not; of course not. As the case is somewhat of a critical one—m', m'—thirty-five days you tell me, Garland, it's run?—I propose to stay here with Dr. Garland to-night, watching the effect of our medicines. Should be gratified, my dear sir, if it could be as quiet as possible. As few present as possible—yes, as few."

Simeon went slowly up the ladder to Stella's room. Jinsy placed her evergreen wand in Marian's hand and stole softly away. To Marian's entreaties Mrs. Barstow sighed, "I sha'n't shet my eyes 'f I go. What's the use o' goin'?"

She went, finally. After the lapse of an hour she appeared on the ladder and beckoned Marian. "I lay there an' thought o' *every*thing, Marun. Land sakes! an' Sim a-snorin' away like all possessed. Wall, he never could hold out as I kin. An' he grows peakeder ev'ry day sis lies there. Marun, I riz up t' ask you ef you'll let me have a sheet t' lay sis out in? I ain't got none b't unbleached factory, and ruther worn some on 'em is, too. She's got the nightgown you giv' her 's long ago as you boarded here—and it'll come handy now—been a-keepin' ont t' look at, it was so pretty, she said; but, land sakes! I knew she meant t' hold on t' it f'r fear she might go off ruther sudden (some girls do, you know), and then she'd have one han'some one. No,

there ain't nobody a-beauin' sis 's I knows on; b't there's a young Englishman over t' the Cut House (has a farm close by), an' he's been over consid'rable often latterly. Don't know, though, but it's because he's lonesome."

"Why, Mrs. Barstow," interrupted Marian, much shocked, "you can have anything I possess if the worst happens. But we will hope that it won't."

"An' jest you peek mighty close when they open them saddlebags, and see what they give sis. But there! 'twon't matter a grain, 's I knows on." Her bare feet ascended from Marian's sight at last.

"There's enough to kill a man," she overheard Dr. Garland expostulate, swiftly, as she stole back to her post of watcher.

"I know it, Garland. But as I told you before, it's kill or cure. She'll die certainly if she don't take it. She *may* live if she does."

And then they laughed slowly when Dr. Garland repeated Simeon's warning. "The old man has been harping on that ever since I was called to his daughter. I said, 'Oh no, certainly not,' always, while all the time I was giving powerful doses of calomel and quinine. But never such potions as yours, my friend." And then as Marian appeared they relapsed into attentive silence.

The long hours wore away, but soon after midnight Mrs. Malvina again descended, alert and fresh as the coming morning. "Sis is better," she promptly said, stooping to listen to her breathing. "I really c'n see a change, I b'lieve."

"You are right, my dear madam," said Dr. Failem, suavely. "I think, if no unusual complications arise, she will recover."

"Well, now, I can go t' work with a good heart. An' I'm goin' t' have breakfast as swift as ever you see in your life, Marun. All three of you must be ravin' hungry. Come, Sim," she called up the ladder. "If you'll flax roun' an' hunt up some eggs, I'll be 'bleeged t' yer f'r once. I don't call on him skursly ever, an' he knows it; b't *now* I guess he'll b' rej'iced t' stir himself."

"Truth to say, that ham and coffee *does* smell mighty invigorating," smiled Dr. Garland, as he stretched himself in his hard chair and crossed his hands above his head wearily.

And a merry enough party drew up their chairs around Mrs. Barstow's table. The unspeakable dread of the night before—the mysterious presence hovering near—had vanished.

Marian was the first to leave. "I will come to-night, Mrs. Barstow, as soon as school is over," she said, as she disappeared through the doorway.

"A very sensible person, indeed," commented Dr. Failem, as the door closed upon her. "A right-down sensible person! Never saw a better nurse than she appeared to be through the whole night."

"And she looks as fresh as a lark this morning, in spite of it," added his medical brother. "Very singular, indeed!"

"And I just lit on 'em," observed Mrs. Barstow, when relating the incident the same evening to Marian. "I asked 'em if they usually called the Miss Lucys an' Miss Judys of their acquaintance '*persons*'? Seemed t' me I'd heard them addressed as 'young ladies.' At least, that was the way Northern folks did. I said if ever there was a 'lady' our Marun was one."

"Yis, Malviny's sort o' ketched holt on ye, Miss

Stone, and 'tain't the *fust* time that she has had her grip on other folkses prop—"

"Now shet up, Sim Basto!" promptly interjected his spouse; "don't begin on that tack ag'in! I guess Marun has a-realizin' sense o' my failin's by this time, without none o' your promptin'."

Marian laughed heartily, as Simeon dryly added: "Wall, yis, Malviny, I ruther agree with ye this time, and feel like sayin' 'our Marun,' too. And I never felt it so difficult to keep from laughin' outright as when Malviny shook her fist at them doctors, and Dr. Failem (who didn't know her ways) set back his cheer, and sprung to his feet as if she'd threatened t' shoot him."

XIX.

MAMMY ROSE AND YELLOW JOE.

THE old estate of "Stetton Woods" lies in the heart of Amelia County. For many generations it had belonged to the Darnells—the thousands of acres and hundreds of slaves. It was famous for the discipline the latter were under, and it was a family boast that they had never had a runaway.

Negroes from neighboring estates sometimes arrived, bearing letters to "Master William," who thereupon scribbled a line, and sent them with it to his own overseer.

At this moment the bearer at once understood what was awaiting him, and his expression became pitiable.

There was no appeal; there was no relief; there was no mercy. Their own master had sent them to taste a severer discipline than his own. There was a good deal to be said in favor of this discipline—it made such excellent servants, such submissive plantation hands. The interchange of civilities in this line were not rare, were promptly accepted and cheerfully executed.

Young Joe remembered seeing many such punishings. Aunt Rose, his mammy, was the family nurse, and her cabin was only a few rods from "the great house." She had brought up two generations of children, and she looked scarcely older than when "Mas'r Willum's" first baby-boy was put in her kindly arms. The love she bore the master's children seemed of an intenser sort than for her own offspring. In addition to love of the true maternal sort, she gave them reverence. In all cases of dispute between them, if appealed to, she was sure to decide summarily against her own.

One day she came upon little Joe with a fine comb, putting forth his utmost strength to reduce his woolly locks to order. Mammy threw back her head and laughed: "See 'im now, dat aggervatin' pickaninny! him done t'ink t' make silky curls like Miss Lucy's, or wavy ha'r like Mas'r Percy's. Ef ye try till de jedgment day obertakes yer, 't neber c'n be done, chile. Let 'em go 'cordin' t' nature. Nobody 'll notice little Joe."

Father, Joe could not remember. In answer to an inquiry in his earliest years, Mammy Rose told him that he had never had one. Joe was "raised" with the white children. They played together, quarrelled, and "made up" in mammy's cabin exactly as if they were children of one family. It was the custom for the negro children who were born on the same day as the white

children to become their exclusive property. In the days of playing and quarrelling this condition of servitude weighed lightly. To be sure, mammy sent him to pick up chips, or to "tote de bucket to de spring," and she never cuffed his playmates as she did his rebellious self.

When master William returned from any journey he never forgot to bring presents for little Joe as well as for the other children. And when the children crowded around, with merry cries of "Papa! papa!" Yellow Joe crowed also, and clapped his little palms together, and shouted "Papa!"

The stately mistress frowned at this, and would have sent him away, but the master only laughed and cried, "Here, Joe, give the 'possum call, and I'll toss you this cake."

But those merry days of childhood were long since over. When young Percy grew larger and went to school, Yellow Joe was his especial servant.

It was a puzzle to Joe why there should be no school for himself. He was quicker to learn than his little master, more lithe and active; in all out-door games he was more than Percy's match. Once he ventured on these mysterious questions to Mammy Rose, who answered impressively:

"Don't yer know, den, chile, dat niggers ain't 'lowed fur t' l'arn outen books? O Lawd!" she groaned, in recollection, "de heaps o' mis'ry dese ole eyes hab seen jess on dat yar 'count! I seen a man hobbled to de groun' wid wooden pins—dey was crotches cut from trees—an' he was whipped so's he done couldn't stan' 'lone!"

"But why? tell me why, mammy? I can't help learnin' when I hear Percy an' Lucy talk 'bout dar

less'ns. I seems t' cotch holt 'thout tryin'. An' when I tried yistiddy t' s'plain t' Lucy—'case she cried ober it so—Percy done tell me ter shut up my hade. Why? I *mus*' know why, mammy!"

"Oh, yis," muttered Mammy Rose, dolefully, "Mas'r Percy, my sweet boy, done learn *dat* less'n well. He quite masterful a'ready. It's in de breed. All de Darnells hab got mighty strong will, Joe. Jess yer 'member dat. An' why don't yer call him Mas'r Percy? Yer b'longs t' him, yer 'members. Yer his by right eber sence yer was born. An' don't y' try t' l'arn more'n yer c'n help—'tain't good f'r ye.

"Dat am what Mas'r Bark'ly say in de Grub Hill Church, whar de ivy does clamb'r mos' beautiful. He done preach Mas'r Lewis's fun'ral sarmon. Mas'r Lewis 'd been dead goin' on sixteen year when de word was sent t' de house dat de bery nextest Sunday him was gwine t' preach his pa's fun'ral sarmon. I neber f'rgot dat yer sarmon, Joe."

"I disremember," said Joe, somewhat sullenly.

Mammy laughed and reached up for her red clay pipe, which she leisurely filled with bits of tobacco; then she stooped to rake a coal from the fire which always smouldered on the hearth—in the summer-time as well as the winter—and between the vigorous puffs she brought forth the remainder of her story:

"Dat was long an' long 'nough 'fore you kim t' plague ole Rose. Mas'r Lewis was as like t' his son Willum as two p'simmons. Mas'r Bark'ly wus a pow'ful good preacher, I 'spect—too gran', though, f'r us po' slave-folks. We house servants was all done sot up 'n de gal'ry ('twas full, I 'member) a-lis'nin' t' all de good t'ings he made out dat Mas'r Willum's pa was. An' de frien's all 'pear t' be pow'ful mournin', 'case

he been in de grave s' long. An' at las' Mas'r Bark'ly, him preach straight 'cross t' *us:* 'Ef yer's good an' 'bedient t' yer master yere y'll get t' heaven's kitchen when y' die; ye may 'pend on it.' An' he p'inted his white han', all shinin' wid rings, at us black folks. 'You ar' not t'run 'g'inst yer master's will; you ar' t' serve him faithful an' tru'. Ye mus'n't long f'r f'rbidden fruits; learnin' isn't good f'r ye. Ef it had been, de Lawd would a-made y' t' know jess as much as de white folks. An' he done say a mighty long word—more'n an inch long — which I done try so hard t' 'member dat I f'rgot it 'fore I lef' de church, but dis yer I'll neber f'rgit—he was so solemn-like a-sayin' it—'ye'll git ter heaven's kitchen ef you are good an' faithful servants yere.'

"Well," added Mammy Rose, composedly knocking the ashes from her pipe, and smoothing her turban over her knee, "I reck'n when Mas'r Lewis done meet ole Rose dar he won't grudge ter gib his han' in welcome." And she rearranged her turban, leisurely.

Mammy Rose noticed that after this conversation Yellow Joe, as he was called on account of his bright complexion, concealed his passion for "white folks' learning;" that he invariably addressed his young master by his title, whom he was assiduous in serving. It seemed, indeed, as if Joe was more active and willing and merry than before, and good-natured Mammy Rose smiled to herself often.

XX.

JOE WRITES HIS NAME IN DUST.

ONE morning Percy Darnell, a handsome young boy of fifteen, came suddenly into the dining-room and surprised his servant tracing characters on the dust which lay on the polished surface of the table.

"You boy! where'd you learn to write?" he demanded, astonished. "Who taught you?"

"No one, Mas'r Percy. It come of itself, like. I jess can't help doin' it, it's so easy."

"Can you not? Doubtless you can read, too. Perhaps Latin and Greek are familiar to you!" Percy's eyes flashed ominously.

"Not a word o' dem, Mas'r Percy! I wouldn't know 'em on no 'count." Joe's face whitened visibly as he caught the gleam of his young master's eyes.

"I don't believe you, Joe. You're only afraid to own up. Here," catching a volume from the shelf near, "if you *don't* read a page from that book, instantly, I'll have you whipped as sure as you are born!"

Joe's fingers trembled as he took the book. He read a page promptly. Then it dropped to the floor with a bang, and he clasped his young master's arm imploringly:

"Oh, Mas'r Percy, I'll neber read no mo'! I'll neber write no mo'! I swar t' yer I won't ef ye'll f'rgit dis yer time!"

"Poh, Joe, no call to be frightened. I haven't threatened you. Mighty pity t' spoil so good-looking a nigger! What shapely hands you've got, Joe; they're

not working hands." He turned and left the room, carelessly whistling a tune.

But that evening Joe was sent to the overseer's "quarters" on some trivial errand, and when he skulked into Mammy Rose's cabin that night he had lost his right forefinger.

"I done tell ye, chile! Mammy tole ye t' let white folks' l'arnin' alone!" sobbed Rose, as she bruised healing herbs and bound it up.

"I'll run away," said Joe, in a sullen whisper.

"An' hab de bloodhoun's let loose?" whispered back his mother, an awful fear wrinkling her face.

But the years rolled away.

"De dreffful war done come t' clean out our housen stuff," as mammy phrased it. In that Virginian household the martial spirit was kindled from the first. The master was in the field early. And as time went on, and the supplies were scarce, and the blockade grew stronger, the best of everything raised on the plantation went to the army. Stuff was woven for the soldiers' suits; horses, mules, and provisions found their way thither.

Miss Lucy, now a lovely and bitter-tongued "patriot," had the large stores, in-doors, ransacked from time to time, as the cries for help for the suffering army reached her ears.

"All mistress' cov'lets gone t' de sodjers!" indignantly ejaculated Mammy Rose. "Her dead ma's beaut'fullest blue an' white cov'let, an' de double rose one dat ole Sally was nigh three months a-weavin', de lin'n what I done help bleach f'r her ma when missy was a baby, all scraped up inter lint—sech heaps an' piles 'f 't! 'Twas mighty good in Missy Lucy, I s'pose—least dat what de kunnel an' de res' say—b't ole Rose what raised de chile t'ink it am a burnin' shame t'

spile good t'ings so. An' whar's her sett'n' out t' come fr'm now? Dey can't b' made in ages, an' dar's no money now t' buy no mo' !"

But Mammy Rose's indignant expostulations availed not against the need of the army, and when the old family coach went to Richmond to be sold—the money therefore to be sent after all the other goods—the faithful old nurse was speechless with affright at the sacrilege. "De kerri'ge dat all de Darnells done ride to dar weddin's in; dat hab carried de ladies to de gran' dinners an' junketin's eber sence Rose was a pickaninny herself! Miss Lucy say dat ef de cause s'ceed, why dey'll jess git mo' right soon, an' she 'spects '*twill* s'ceed, suah, 'tis sech a rachus cause, she say. But I dunno. Don't seem right t' *me*—don't seem right."

And then came the sadness that crept, shudderingly, into so many households throughout the land. The fierce heat of battle-passion spent, ah me! what remains for the home-group above which the pall of desolation spreads?

There was no time to count losses then. There was no time for idle wailing. There was scarcely time to bury the dead. Action! action! And the young of the race—two boys of seventeen and nineteen years—left Sister Lucy trying to smile bravely, as she sped them away from her—one brother to return no more.

When Lieutenant Percy turned soldier he took his servant with him. Joe was elated at the stirring sights and sounds. His bright, active ways made him a favorite with all. He was silent, reticent before the soldiery, who were fond of carousing over their camp-fires, hearing everything and putting things together, and especially listening to every scrap of intelligence concerning the Northern army.

It was the eleventh of July, and Jubal Early lay before the fortifications covering the Northern approaches to Washington. There was great excitement in the camp, and eager boasts of the morrow. There would be "a little fighting," a dash, an army retreating, and one advancing triumphantly into the poorly-defended national capital.

Yellow Joe shared this excitement of the camp. His plans were better laid than Early's, and when evening shadows lengthened into dusk Yellow Joe was among the Yankees.

In the following years Joe's growth was rapid. The plantation ways slowly slipped from him. He found no difficulty in obtaining work, and in his spare hours he studied diligently.

All this so long ago! why, it seemed to him only as yesterday. And when he reflected that he had served in the "House of Delegates," among the sons of those white men who once would have scourged him with thorns for thus presuming, he could not help a pleasurable vanity at the new order of things. But he hated Percy Darnell, because "the new order" was sullenly acquiesced in. Percy thought it practically impossible to meet his former slave on terms of perfect equality, and this attitude, together with the remembrance of former wrongs, fostered the ill-feeling between the two rival candidates for the Legislature.

As Joe went onward this October evening to the political meeting in his neighborhood, his mind reverted to many points of antagonism, past but still poignant.

XXI.

A POLITICAL MEETING.

It was seven o'clock, and the schoolhouse was open. A few white men were present, among them Josiah Crittenden and Simeon Barstow (who styled himself "the Northern refugee!"); the remainder were of every shade of color, from ebony to white.

Good-natured banter was plentiful, and indulgently received: "Well, I reck'n thar'll b' some right sharp speak'n' yere t'-night. I reck'n yer've got sharp'ned up 'nough t' shave a cow, Brother Edwin."

"I dunno 'bout de cow, Uncle Cesar, b't I reck'n I'm right peart nough t' shave a hog," replied Edwin, promptly, amid cheers and cries from the younger ones of "Whar's dat yer hog?"

"Why, in de pen, suah," returned Edwin, coolly. "You young uns mus' done let de shoats alone, or y'll be done fotched up 'n de penimtention'ry. Dat am so, cert'n 's yer born."

A loud laugh greeted this sally. Junius Epps, whose reputation in this line was notorious, subsided into the crowd behind him.

"Dis yer meet'n' 'll come t' order," resumed Edwin, placidly smiling. "I dispose dat we 'lect Brother Willum Dixy chairman 'thout no fuss; we done wants t' git t' work 's soon 's we kin."

"Dat's so!" shouted several voices, and William, an aged and stately mulatto, was beckoned forward.

"If I'm cheerman ob dis meet'n', I done call on Brother Thomas ober dar in de corner t' op'n it wid prayer."

Thomas shook his gray head, and motioned in turn: "Brother Robbins, *you* pray."

"But I dunno, Brother Thomas, as it's my dooty," replied Moses Robbins, in his slow way; "dey called on *you*, an' I dunno as it's my dooty."

"Yes, yes, you pray."

"Well, den, I'se will'n', b't I dunno 's it's my dooty."

Moses straightened himself slowly and rested on his hickory staff.

"O our Fadder which art in heaben, hallowed be dy name! We am met t'gedder dis ebenin' t' c'nsider what sort o' men we'll 'lect t' rule ober us. We know bery well dat we heap rudder hab a stiff 'Publican dan any ob de slipp'ry sorts leadin' us away from de straight an' narrer way we wants ter foller. We 'member, good Lawd, dat under dee dey gave us po' blacks our freedom. We done feels like trustin' dem still. B't, O our Fadder, der's some so snaky dat we feels like wip'n' 'em out wid de grubb'n' hoe, like we do de sassafras roots 'long de branches. We done c'n't trus' 'em an inch. We know dat we mus' take sech rulers as we c'n git in dese yere ingen'rate days, f'r de c'nfusion am gre't. We leave it all in dy han's! Do dou sen' a good man t' make laws f'r us, who'll hab dy fear 'n his heart—much 's he kin, anyway! Gib us an undiscoursin' sperit, dat we may tell de tricky ones from de troo, an' not trus' eb'ry white man dat seeks t' bamboozle our po' souls, nor yit t' eb'ry colored brudder who don't know 'nough t' lead hisself home o' nights fr'm de sto'. Dar's Crocket Gibs'n—we don't want *him!* Put his light under de bush'l measure, Lawd, an' we'll gib dee all de praise f'reber."

"Dar's only one fault t' be found wid Brudder Rob-

bins's pray'rs—dey tells us our dooties mos' too clus," observed the chairman, graciously. "We'll listen now t' remarks fr'm Brudder Edwin."

"De case am right plain," said Edwin, quickly responding. "De Funders, dey wants ter keep on wid de pow'r dey has, an' t' git mo'. De trouble am dat dey don't favor de frèe schools. Dey've allers been sot 'g'inst us po' black folks a-knowin' how t' take keer o' ourselfs. Dat am a fac'! Yer knows all dat widout my tell'n'. De ole 'Serv'tive party goes f'r t' split up us 'Public'ns all it kin. Now yere's Mr. Percy Darnell, what am mighty anxious you should send him to Richmon' dis winter. He's t' speak t' yer hisself pres'ntly, an' y'll hear his side. B't ye won't go f'r t' sen' him, my brethren! he'll done take colored votes as fas' as y'll 'low, suah! Oh, yis, my frien's! an' dat am all he wants ob ye anyway. He's a Funder. Oh, ob course! B't dat am not jess de dejection we hab t' him f'r t' make laws f'r us. It's 'case he's a frien' t' us only t' serve hisself. 'Member dat, if you please. It am true eb'ry time."

Cries of indignation arose. "But yere am Yellow Joe now. De Hon'rable Yellow Joe—dat am de name we'll stick ter. We knows him bes' by dat. He's one ob us, suah! An' in de matter dat de white folks count on—eddication—he am cl'ar ahead o' Mr. Percy Darnell—like de 'possum when he done run up a tree an' leave de dogs at de root.

"Dar's allers been 'nough money appurperated eb'ry year t' keep up de schools an' pay de teachers. Dat am a livin' fac'. Whar, den, did all de money go to?" His voice rose with solemn emphasis. "It done went inter de mighty bulgin' pocket ob de ole C'nserv'tive party who done raised de funds. No wonder dat dey styles.

demselves de *Funders!* Dey done gits all de funds, an' dey keeps all de funds. Course dey am Funders, suah 'nough!" Shouts of approbation arose, and cries, "Giv' 'em some mo'!"

"De bery p'lite an' able gov'nor mus' hab *his* sal'ry, let who will go widout. Dar was s' *much* fundin', dat when he come f'r t' draw his pay de treas'ry is declar'd empty. Well, dat won't do nohow, he say t' hisself. I'm de gov'nor, an' mus' hab my funds—de commonwealth owes me dat, it do. Dar's de school-fund. De teachers mus' go widout if any one—dere am twice as many schools as we oughter hab, anyhow. An' in goes his han' t' fund f'r hisself a few thousand dollars of the appurperashun raised f'r t' pay de teachers ob de free schools.

"Dat yere Miss Maryon got only quarter ob her year's pay. An' so 'twas wid odder teachers; de fus' t' come t' pr'sent dere cla'ms got de mos', ob course. Dat am what fundin' means, my frien's, an' dat's de bery way de Funders mean f'r t' pay de State debt."

"I declar'," interrupted Thomas Gibson, rising to his full height, and shaking violently one lean forefinger, "I does like t' see a man stick t' his principles; dat's what I allers will say—stick t' 'em! Ef he's a straight-out 'Public'n, why stay so, an' not b' foolin' roun' wid either Readjuster or Funder."

"Step right up here, Brudder Thomas, you're de bery man I wants t' see. I've got your name right down in dis little book yere," pulling one from his pocket. "How 'bout dat little ten dollars you took las' 'lection an' voted f'r de 'Serv'tive candidate? Oh, yes, my frien's, I likes f'r a man t' stick t' his principles!"

Thomas edged away from the speaker, who continued: "An' you too, Brudder Junius, speak up now an' tell

us all 'bout dat ole Funder barb'cue you 'tended de odder day! *Any* party c'n git yer po' ole body by giv'in' a slice o' ham an' a whiskey toddy at a barb'cue. Yis, an' a right down peart dinner o' roast shoat an' hom'ny an' de odder fixin's will buy yer, body *an'* soul. Fac'!

"B't I done reck'n dat he's got 'nough Funder barb'cue t' las' him till de jedgment. Oh yes, my frien's, *gran'* barb'cue, brass band fr'm Richmon', percessions, great ovation, so dey *said*.

"But dey fooled de crowd. De barb'cue ran short o' eatin' stuff; de brass band was a drum an' a battered ole bugle; de percession was about two hundred mounted men, an' seventy-two ob dem was boys under age, an' mos' ob dem rode mools—sech a chance o' mools!—de rackedest ole creeturs dat eber went f'r t' sell dere vote f'r a miz'ble mess o' pottage!

"An' now I'll gib way f'r t' hear fr'm de Hon'rable Percy Darnell." Edwin stepped aside amid great cheering.

"It done 'pear t' *me*," modestly observed Cesar Peachy, "dat we don't need f'r t' hear any 'Serv'tive talk. It'll sort o' obfuse our min's; we've done got jess 's much 's we c'n hol' now."

Yellow Joe stepped out from the throng, confident and radiant. This was the contest that he delighted in. "I pray you, my friends, by all means hear what Mr. Darnell has to say. You must hear both sides to be able to judge well. Remember that I have the closing speech to make, and I promise not to confuse you in the least."

Mr. Darnell then quietly reviewed the previous argument, dwelling at great length on the State's indebtedness, and closing with: "I wish to say, plainly, that the

Conservatives *do* acknowledge *the debt*, and not a portion of it, like your allies, the Readjusters."

Yellow Joe came forward and said, with some elation: "The honorable speaker has only been heating water; it is now hot, and I only ask for ten minutes t' scald the hog. I don't care a green persimmon about your Funder 'acknowledgment.' You don't pay a cent of it, and what is more, you don't mean to. You, my brethren, all know the gentleman well. I mean you shall know him better. God knows *I* know him, by this token"— holding up his mutilated right hand. "And why should you colored folks affiliate with the old Conservative party? It's the same old party that kept you in bondage—not the one that struck off your shackles and placed this ballot in your hands as a safeguard against them.

"Why should any of you be Funders? I will tell you. Some of you are Funders because some white man they toady to is one. Some few because they think it's right; that sort haven't brains enough to distinguish between right and wrong. Some because they are scared about white folks' talk of Mahone and his purpose. They are easily scared. A white sheet and moonlight is more than enough to manufacture the wickedest sort of a ghost. Some are bought—and that is the meanest class of all! Lord save dar souls in 'lection time, f'r they haven't strength f'r t' take keer o' themselves." Yellow Joe was getting "warmed up to his work," as his dropping into dialect showed. Only when greatly moved did his tongue revert to the simple speech of his race.

"Oh, yes, my brethren"—a fine scorn wrinkling his face—"you know *him!* How he put his name on a Republican ticket four years ago. *Your* votes put him

into the Legislature; your votes made him what he is. He has been Tax-Collector and School-Commissioner. Before you took him up on your broad, toil-worn hands and landed him in offices of trust, what was he? Because his name has been on your ticket you simpletons supposed him a Republican. He is anything to gain office. He became a Readjuster for a brief time, but failing to get the good things the gods provide, he turned to the Funders. I am going to tell you of the bargains he made at headquarters. To fool you, who cannot read, he is to lead your vote to swell the vote of the old party. They want t' split up our ticket so it won't carry the day.

"March up and pay your taxes, if it takes the last dollar, an' don't you let *anybody do it for you!*"

Much more talk of this kind the colored men could not endure. There was a movement among the younger men. Simeon Barstow muttered that it "was a warm night for the season," and he "guessed" he'd "better be a-gittin' hum."

And Josiah Crittenden "reckoned" he would "git shet o' the meet'n'. Ry'lene was ruther skeery 'bout hants an' sich trash." Several white men followed their example.

Then began a remarkable scene among the blacks—rivalling their religious meetings in fervor—approaching frenzy. Several wished to speak at once. A few took sides with the Hon. Percy, but the majority scowled dissatisfaction, and muttered ominously.

Yellow Joe, seeing the storm he had raised likely to become perilous, sought to ease his remarks of their peculiar sting. But it was too late. Nobody appeared to hear him.

Percy Darnell edged cautiously toward the open door.

"Now for it!" he said to himself, suddenly vanishing from sight of the angry crowd, who poured out after him in hot pursuit.

"Well, den, I do hope dose young fools won't skeer de bref outen Mas'r Percy," remarked old Cesar, as he trod cautiously homeward, in company with Judah Harris.

"He done git outer sight de quickest I eber see him," laughed Uncle Judah. "Him so nat'rally lazy dat'll do him good t' git shooken up a bit. Dey only 'tend f'r t' skeer him; dey wouldn't tech a ha'r ob his head."

"I dunno 'bout dat," demurred Cesar, skilfully avoiding a rut in the road. "Dey do git so pow'ful stirred. He come ob mighty good ole fam'ly, b't, like eb'ryt'ing else in ole Virginny, it am a-runnin' down bery rapid. All de bes' lan' is a-growin' up t' ole field on de Stetton Woods plantation.

"I 'member his fadder, Cunnel Willum, so well, an' *his* fadder befo' him, wid his white ha'r an' ruffled shirt-fronts, and sof' han's, as white an' small as any lady's. Not a stroke o' work any ob 'em eber do in der lives. Hi, Judah, does yer reck'n dey'll slip 'long so easy like t'rough dis yer world an' inter de odder, allers? Well, ole Mas'r knows bes'. He gib us all our lot. I done do b'lieve dat f'r certain suah!"

XXII.

PERCY'S RETREAT.

THE discomfited champion of Virginia Conservatism swung himself up among the tree-branches, and relieved his feelings by a prolonged low whistle. Then he laughed heartily at the absurdity of his situation, practised gymnastics awhile among the lower boughs, and soliloquized:

"That confounded rascal of a Joe! Paying off old scores, was he? How I wish I had him back in the old times before the war! For exactly one hour—that's about the time he harangued!" A long silence, more expressive than words.

"Father always said Yellow Joe had a spice of the devil in him. 'Spice,' is it? Why, it's the entire animal, hoofs and all." Another silence.

"I reckon I may as well be getting on. I might be shot for a wild turkey roosting on the branches." He laughed heartily at this pleasant conceit, as he swiftly walked away from the forest.

Suddenly he came upon Miss Marian's pretty whitewashed cottage, with its little yard in front, surrounded by a whitewashed paling.

"I wonder how she manages to live in this lonely fashion? It looks tolerably comfortable, too, I must admit. New land broken up from the forest, and the stumps are all gone; plenty of bushes and shrubs and trees. I wonder how they do it?—these Yankee folks what come here and make our run-down, worn-out places look better than our very best."

At the little gate he paused. A light shone from a window, screened by a large honeysuckle trained to a trellis. As the light filtered through the leaves he noticed its clustering white and yellow blossoms, its last epoch of blooming before the frosts of November; as he waited its fragrance floated to him, as if in welcome.

"I wish I dared try again to see her. But she will not forget. She froze me so the last time that I haven't been the same man since. Curious what ice there is in these Northern folk! I feel the same old chill as I think of it; like it was Christmas snow sifting down." His teeth chattered.

His mind appeared, suddenly, to be made up, quite to his own surprise, for he smiled quizzically as he pushed the gate, which noiselessly yielded. A moment later he was knocking at the door. It was opened almost instantly by Marian herself. The look of surprise on her face was supplanted by one of aversion, but she suppressed its manifestation, and hospitably invited him to enter.

"The truth is, Miss Stone, that your window allured me hither, in spite of my resolution never to try to see you again," he began, rather feebly.

Her smile was cold. "My door is always open to any one, white or black, who needs my help or sympathy." She appeared to be choosing her words carefully. "But I do not imagine for a moment that you would class yourself under either head, Mr. Darnell."

He made no immediate answer. She went on: "I have had pupils in to see me this evening, and they have delayed me. I was making out my school report when they came, and if you will excuse me a few moments?—ah! I sincerely ask your pardon; you *do* need me. I feel sure you are suffering from a chill."

His teeth chattered as he tried to reply. She was already astir in all manner of kind offices. A tiny stove stood in one corner, a tea-kettle thereon. Soon a fire crackled and sparkled, and the kettle began to hum in a homely fashion.

Never before had Percy Darnell been so waited on, in all his thirty-six years. He felt a swift sense of shame to see her gentle and gracious ladyhood unbending to minister to his wants. His own sister, he knew well enough, would never do these kind offices for suffering humanity. She—his sister—had been brought up to do nothing for herself that a servant could do for her. He, also, was accustomed to that way, and had never missed anything. He tried to protest. He motioned her back with his imploring face, but speak he could not; the ague fit was on him, and was mightier than he.

"Do not try to talk," she commanded. "Just be quiet and well behaved, as a Darnell should be." And this time her smile was not cold; it was deliciously sweet and friendly.

"I will," he finally stammered, watching her make tea. He had never liked tea, but the aroma of that was heavenly.

Then she swept away her school litter from the small, round table, and pushed it toward the arm-chair wherein he reclined, enveloped in a blanket. Great had been his discomfiture when she insisted on swathing him in this useful article, but he was powerless to resist; he was in "the enemy's camp."

Was she his enemy? he queried to himself as he watched her, wishing he could pierce beneath that marble coldness of demeanor and discern the treasures he felt sure were hidden there.

Oh, if this evening might only last forever! For the

first time almost in his life he felt what a home would be like.

Suddenly he threw off his blanket and regained speech: "It was very warm in the meeting, in more senses than one, and I stayed too long afterward in the woods, no doubt. The fact is," with a half laugh, "I just escaped mighty rough treatment. But I don't reckon any of them were ever your pupils," he added, gallantly. "I confess I felt a little afraid of them—such an unworthy feeling for a man—a feeling I never experienced before."

"But not an unworthy feeling for a woman, I suppose," pouring out the tea.

And then his thoughts swiftly reverted to that scene, ten years ago, when she had met and faced him without a trace of fear. His expression of genuine distress and dismay moved her, albeit she could not divine its cause.

"Come, Mr. Darnell," she pleasantly entreated. "We will drink tea together as a sign of peace. The Indian braves buried the hatchet amid clouds of smoke; let us imitate their example amid the fumes of Bohea."

"I am only too delighted to do so," and his face grew radiant. "I began to fear you had a heart of stone," he murmured.

"Stone by name and stone by nature?" she retorted, gayly. "You are making puns; you are decidedly better. How is it when Dr. Garland dismisses a patient? Does he say, 'I pronounce you cured'?"

"Oh no, indeed. He merely edges off by degrees," he answered, laughingly; "ceases his visits gradually, I mean, of course."

"But not in Stella Barstow's case," said Marian, merrily. "Her mother set her arms a-kimbo, and commanded him not to 'run up such a bill that they

would be 'bleeged to sell out to pay it.' Which so affrighted the doctor that he came no more."

"But I don't mean to follow that example," said the young man, placidly. "You are cruel to even suggest it. And I'm not well enough either to be summarily discharged."

"You must try my crullers, Mr. Darnell; you perhaps do not know that we New England women take especial pride in our cookery. Only, there, in that favored land, we call them by the better name of 'doughnuts.'"

"Nothing could be better, by whatever name they're called," he murmured, somewhat incoherently.

"Speaking of Dr. Garland," he added, after a lengthy pause, "did you know what manner of reception the Barstows bestowed on his bill for attendance on their daughter? As *I* heard the matter, it was astonishing."

"You probably mean that his exorbitant bill was astonishing?" returned the teacher, coldly. "In all my knowledge of doctors' charges for services, real or imaginary, I never saw one equal to that. Clearly, people must learn to practise the old command, 'Heal thyself,' if they have not the boon of riches to satisfy the physician's greed."

"You speak rather strongly, Miss Stone. I assure you, Dr. Garland comes of a right good old family—one of the first families of Nottoway. They belonged, away back to the old Revolutionary days, to the real chivalry of the State," spake up the convalescent warmly, in defence of his Southern "kinsfolk."

"How are the mighty fallen, then!" hotly exclaimed the teacher. "I mean the mighty 'chivalry.' You must not feel nettled, Mr. Darnell, by my remarks," noticing the quick drooping of his eyelids. "But we

of the North cannot associate that grand old word 'chivalry' with the exhibition of that meanest passion of the human heart—greed, sordid greed!"

"Garland himself told me that he consulted with Dr. Sanderson (a high authority) as to what he ought to charge Barstow. He was nearly three months in attendance, for after the fever left her an abscess appeared, and he was frequently there in the night. Sanderson told him 'if Barstow were a rich man seven hundred dollars was none too much; but if he were in moderate circumstances five hundred dollars would be about right.' You perceive, Miss Stone, Garland only acted from the best medical advice in the State."

"And how much would Dr. Garland have charged *you*, Mr. Darnell, for equal time and skill in attendance on your own sister, or any other *Southern* family in the county?" Marian looked him keenly in the eye.

Percy reflected a moment, then laughed: "It's mighty small pickings the doctors get out of any Southern family nowadays," he declared, frankly.

"But your 'circumstances' are better than the Barstows," persisted Marian, more mildly. "They would be called very poor in any locality in the North."

"But doctors must live, you know," asserted Percy, breaking his cruller into dainty morsels, which he tasted slowly, as if desirous of prolonging the delectable treat.

"Please finish the sentence," smiled Marian, mischievously. "'Doctors must live, you know,' and live on Yankees—such chance ones as care to try this genial climate to prolong wasting lives. Oh, if rich Yankees would only migrate hither! Can you bring yourself to believe that your good 'chivalrous' doctor—"

"Spare me, I entreat!" laughed Percy.

"Stopping at the Barstows, on his way from a profes-

sional call elsewhere, charged fifteen dollars for a single visit?" finished Marian, calmly.

Percy looked incredulous, and shrugged his shoulders: "Some surgery, no doubt," he muttered.

"I saw the bill, and know whereof I speak," said she. "But we will bury the subject, as Mrs. Barstow has the document in question. She made quite an elaborate affair of it. I was invited, and was present, of course. When I arrived I found all of Jinsy's family drawn up in solemn order around the old oak tree by the door. Mrs. Barstow had requested me to bring the call-bell from school as I came by, which I did. Several others happened along just then, or came by invitation—altogether an illustrious gathering."

They both laughed pleasantly.

"And then what? I feel interested," asked Percy.

"Why, she deposited the paper in an excavation previously made, stamping the earth over it with an energy peculiar to herself, and delivered such an 'opinion' (she called it) of the medical fraternity of Amelia County, that even Mr. Barstow called from the window, 'Malviny, you've said enough.'"

"As Cesar has it, she 'put forth an oration,'" smiled the happy guest.

"And then she tolled the bell, 'five hundred times,' she said; I did not stay to count. It was all so droll."

She did not talk much after this, but Percy was in a state of dreamy content, and cared nothing for her silence. Presently she cleared away the table, his gaze following her deft motions—the dainty way in which she folded the snowy cloth and washed the dishes—yes, actually washed the dishes!

"Do you do all this yourself, every day?" he ventured to ask, in one of her pauses of putting things away.

She turned, with a look of surprise at the question, and gave evidence of the region of her "bringing up" by replying with another question:

"Did you suppose, Mr. Darnell, that housework *did itself?* I wish it did," she added, as he thought somewhat wearily; "but exercise is good for us, you know."

"It is *said* to be." And he smiled. "I am a lazy dog. My opinion is worth absolutely nothing. I wish, sometimes, that I had been raised in the North, like yourself."

"But why?" And now she was genuinely interested as well as astonished.

He did not reply at once. Perhaps he was selecting a fitting phrase. "You would like me better, Miss Marian; that is the true reason," he frankly said. She looked at him with a dreamy, far-away expression. Evidently her thoughts were away among her own people. He looked at her. It was a serene face, the brow unwrinkled, the full lips red as in early youth; the blue of her eyes had deepened in color, as is often noticed in those who have deeply sorrowed or whose "lines have fallen" amid rough and uncongenial places.

Yes, there was the same firm expression to the lovely mouth, serious and unchangeable. Not a thread of gray streaked the auburn hair which glittered golden in the sunlight. Its only fault, Percy thought, was the severe plainness of its arrangement. It should ripple in shining waves, and break in the foam of ringlets—that treasure of hair! What a picture she would make!" he said to himself.

Suddenly she looked up and met his full, admiring gaze. "I trust you are quite recovered?" she said, hastily, and rising. "It is growing very late."

"Indeed, I feel right well, thanks to you. You are a true Samaritan, requiting evil with good."

"Oh!" she made a deprecating gesture with her hand. "The evil is so far away and so forgotten, and the good is so infinitesimally small, I am thankful to make amends, in my small way, for my people's misconduct."

"*Is* it forgotten, then, that evil night ten years ago, when a half dozen wild, reckless fellows—myself the suggester and leader of this band—rode to Sim Barstow's to give the newly arrived nigger-teacher that insulting serenade? Miss Stone, I here swear, by all that is holy and sacred, that entirely as we hated the Yankee nation then, and enraged as every true Southern man was at the idea of the freedom and education of their former chattels, such a visitation would have been impossible if we had not imbibed whiskey all the evening! That abominable drink caused us to behave like demons instead of gentleman. Oh, how I have hated myself ever since that wretched night! And you stood there so serene and trustful and altogether lovely, the moonlight—that cold December moonlight—framing you in a picture, that my heart has bowed down and worshipped you ever since.

"Yes, Marian (I *will* call you so), tipsy as I was I have loved you from that night. Year after year has passed away, and you have been colder than ice and as repellent whenever I have tried to explain. You would not hear. You heeded not my abject misery.

"Yes, the years have drifted away, and I am surprised to find my youth gone. I have drifted with them quite into middle-age." With his hand on the door-knob he paused.

"I, too, am middle-aged." She smiled, a little satiri-

cally. "But one need not be sorry for that; we are only nearer home."

"Ah, I did not mean just that way! I am not religious, and I cling to life. You do not know, Marian, how I could cherish an earthly home if only you would share my remaining years!"

"That can never be, Mr. —"

"Call me Percy," he implored. "Let me hear you say it once!"

"I believe you, Percy," she smiled, "to be only half-serious. But I am wholly so—what is left of me, that is. Years ago I had a great trouble, and the best of me died then; I feel nowadays like my own shadow."

"Ah," he murmured low, "thank you for telling me!"

"I am not unhappy; don't think so; the world is bright and fair—"

"As yourself," he interrupted, breathlessly.

"And now I must really hurry you a little; I keep New England hours here, or *try* to."

"Oh, I am going right smart. Marian, you can't prevent my caring for you. I shall not try, even, not to love you. Even New England ice thaws out in time, in time! God bless you now and always, whether here or among your native rocks and rills. Yes, I repeat it; I wish I had been born there. Forgive me for so detaining you, and good-by, good-by!"

As he went away he plucked a sprig of honeysuckle. "She is like this. She is so sweet and lovely, and yet so brilliant; so gracious in all the ways which lend a charm to wifehood! Percy Darnell, did you think a jewel like that was to grace and brighten and redeem the fading splendors of your old ancestral home?

"What a lonely life, for her, she is leading! In this

country solitude, without real companionship, bound down by arduous tasks! Nature meant her for better things. The aroma of everything in life that is joyous and brilliant should encompass her.

"Ah well, if I cannot, in time, win her regard and respect I don't much care what does become of me! What does it matter, now, whether Joe or I goes to the Legislature?"

And Marian Stone, the adored teacher of the poor black children, what are her reflections as the remarkable interview is slowly recalled, sitting by her lonely fire, the clock-hands pointing to midnight?

"It is certainly an improvement on the one ten years ago. Even the manners of 'the chivalry' feel the spirit of progress. Ten years? and it seems but as yesterday since I stood, that first night, in Mrs. Barstow's doorway.

"Ah me, how much has occurred to change these Southern people! Why should I harbor one feeling of bitter recollection? I do not. Why, I, my old self, am dead and buried. I am never more the Marian Stone who tripped gayly and songfully along the olden years. Such a washed-out and forlorn Marian as I now am!

"But I have my vocation. Who is it says that every woman should have a vocation? It is true, and, I repeat, I have found mine. Come, Marian Stone, it is time to go to bed and dream."

"Good-by, good-by!" How like a sad farewell those words went ringing adown the mazes of her morning dreams—like the cry of the shipwrecked clinging to the frail spar which suddenly, as by an unseen force, is spun far from the outstretching fingers into the waste of waters.

XXIII.

STELLA JANE "GOES OFF."

"THE mortal suz, Marun! It's come about as I expected all along. I've told you 'bout young Shepar'son, the Englisher, a-hangin' 'round sis? I told Sim I could see with one eye that he meant t' make a wife o' her; but law! Sim, you know, don't care a grain whether sis ever goes off or not. He's allers so taken up with himself—that's the trouble—an' so he is pretty toler'ble comfortable, an' has 'nough to eat an' drink, an' no chores t' do, an' suthin' t' read from mornin' t' night—allers a-porin' over the newspapers you send him—why, he don't care whether the world moves or not. An' I can't seem t' git him int'rested 'bout sis's wedding. I'm clear beat out a-tryin'. There! I don't make 't a p'int t' speak ag'inst my own husband—"

Marian smiled involuntarily.

"But he *is* 'nough t' erritate a saint. 'I can't see, Malviny, much t' crow about. If she *don't* marry she'll have trouble 'nough in life; and if she *does* marry it'll be doubled, if not more.' What you goin' to do with a man that answers you like that, say, Marun?"

"Nothing, Mrs. Barstow." Marian's face dimpled with merriment. "How glad I shall be to go to a wedding! For, of course, you intend to invite me? I will make myself very useful, I assure you."

"Wall, I should, Marun, if Stellur Jane was t' a been spliced t' hum. We've talked it all over, ev'ry way, an' the gin'ral feelin' seems t' be that as little fuss be made over the marter as poss'ble. So we sha'n't have

no great sort of a wedd'n' at hum. Sis an' Shepar'son are a-goin' t' walk out sorter quiet over to Grub Hill church, an' I'm a-goin' 'long too. Sis sha'n't have the knot tied without my seein' it's done properly ; I don't know what sort of dodge these Southern parsons might be up to—''

"Oh, Mrs. Barstow !" protested the teacher.

"Y' never c'n tell, Marun. Sim, he ain't able t' go, an' I don't know as he would, anyway. He's run down mortal fast latterly, as you'll say when you see him. Don't set up no gre't now, an' hain't no app'tite wuth mentionin'. When one's app'tite gives out, there's nothin' t' hold on to ! That corn-starch pudd'n' you sent over he picked away at a little, jest b'cause you made it, I know. Other folkses vittals allers tastes better'n our own ; an' I don't have so much t' do with as I used ter.'' A long sigh ended in a thoughtful silence.

"An' what I was a-goin' t' ask you, if I c'n ever git 'roun' the board t' it, was this : would you jest as soon come an' set with Sim while I was gone ? F'r I don't feel quite like clearin' out an' leavin' him all alone, he chokes up so. An' 'twon't take many more sech spells, Marun—not many more sech spells, I tell ye.''

"It will be a privilege to stay with him, Mrs. Barstow,'' said Marian, with sweet gravity.

"Sis'll have t' flax roun' consider'ble more'n she's been used t', I tell Sim,'' mused Mrs. Malvina, and her lips worked tremulously as she brooded over this theme. "An' Sim he says it'll 'be good f'r her ; it's jest exactly what she needs.' Wall, mabbe I have sp'iled her some. I humored her more'n I should ef I hadn't a lost all my other gals ; b't there ! she mus' hoe her own row now ! There ain't no women folks over to Shepar'son's—the old man 's a widower—an' she won't be

hectored an' haw'd at by no mother-in-law, which is a great deal of comfort."

"I should like to make Stella a present," observed the teacher, thoughtfully, "if you could give me a hint what she would like. Stella has always been very friendly to me, and I should like to testify my regard for her."

"You've done that a plenty times, Marun. An' come t' that, I don't never give no 'hints;' I speak right out allers. Sim says I'm too blunt; but there! I guess I know that my bark's wuss'n my bite. An' I guess you know 't too by this time, Marun. I didn't do jest right b' you once, I know; but law suz! I knowed you never laid up no grudge ag'inst me; when I'm mad I'm mad all over. There!"

"*What* is my present to be?" laughed Marian. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee."

"Wall, a crittur can't in reason 'xpect more'n that." Mrs. Barstow's face brightened. "An' t' tell the truth (I may as well let the cat out the bag fus' as las'), I come over t' see 'f I couldn't buy it of ye, y' know—do washin' f'r ye or suthin'; I can do mos' anythin'."

Marian patiently waited, watching the tumultuous working of Mrs. Barstow's mouth. "I've wished a hundred times I c'd see suthin' on Stellur Jane as genteel-lookin' as your blue silk dress is on you. An' 't don't look right, someway, f'r a girl to step off in anythin' but silk. Silk seems t' bring good luck with 't, some way. F'r my part, I stood up with Sim in calico ('twas new, though), and I've never had no luck 'bout nothin'," sighed she.

Marian was smiling now, and she brought forth the coveted article of raiment without delay. "I'm sure it

will fit her," said she, cheerily; "we are very nearly of the same size. Good luck go with it."

"An' you'll be over t'-morrer? An' see us start? Land sakes! I don't know b't I shall go clear t' the c'u't-house 'fore I git hum, t' see sis landed safe." Mrs. Barstow went off with an air of triumph, hugging her precious parcel as if it were a baby.

"Wedding bells, ring merrily, oh!" sang Marian the next morning, as she paced along the forest path to the Barstows. "Indeed, I wish there *were* bells to ring; I could keep step to them so well to-day," she laughed aloud, and her own voice sounded joyful even to herself.

"Why, Miss Stone, you're renewing your youth!" exclaimed Simeon, as she entered the kitchen. He propped himself on his crossed arms in bed, the better to examine her countenance. "You don't b'gin t' look s' old as does Stellur there."

"Thanks for the compliment, sir," merrily sweeping a grand courtesy. "This is a great day, sir. Weddings don't occur every day."

"That's so. And I'm glad they don't. What with so much sparkin' goin' on, besides Malviny's sortin' over of chists an' eternally gabblin' 'bout our daughter's 'settin' out' (she calls it), an' Jinsy's children runnin' in forty times t' git peeps at 'de bride,' I can't sense what I'm readin' much."

"We will endeavor to keep out of your highness' way as much as possible," Marian finished, with another profound obeisance.

"Merry as a meadow-lark, isn't she, Jinsy?" Simeon smiled rather reluctantly.

"I done been a-watchin' her eber sence she open de do'. I has, Mr. Basto. I say ter myself, 'Our Miss Maryon am as chipper 's a squir'l dis day.' Mought be

dat she am a-t'inkin' 'bout follerin' ob Miss Stella's egsample." Every tooth glistened as Jinsy opened her wide mouth with an appalling grin.

"O Jinsy!" said Marian, vainly trying to look serious, "I didn't think that my first friend would have turned on me so!"

"Hev' a piece of wedd'n' cake, Marun." Mrs. Barstow passed around a generous plateful. "Mabbe Sim 'll be persuaded t' try a piece, seein' it's sis's wedd'n' day. It's good riz cake; jest the same, Sim, as you an' I hed when we stood up 'fore old Parson Green up 'n old Onta', forty-one year ago come next Candlemas Day. Dear me, how time flies!"

"Yes, time flies, and now it's time we was going," said the groom, in a wheezing voice, as if he were asthmatic. He was a short, thick-set young fellow, of ruddy coloring and bashful demeanor, keeping in the background of this family group, and dropping his eyes under the fire of glances levelled at him by the colored children. "We don't wish to keep the clergyman waiting at the church, do we?"

"Massy, no, I s'pose not. Here's sis's bunnit, Marun," producing a pretty straw with a blue ribbon simply looped around it; "matches her dress well, don't it?"

"Stella looks very nicely," smiled Marian, bestowing a hearty kiss on her cheek, "and I hope that a great many happy years are before her."

There were handshakings and "God-speeds" in the simple country fashion of the neighborhood, and with Mrs. Barstow leading the way, "the procession," as Mrs. Malviny styled it, formed. Next to her walked the bride and groom, hands clasped, and swinging idly. Then Jinsy followed, with M'ria Ann Radikash, Kitty

Cutadash, now grown a tall, plump young damsel, while the other members of her numerous family paired off behind them.

Marian had provided herself with an old horseshoe, cast, luckily, near the road before her school, and she stood in the doorway watching them go down the road, merrily swinging it.

"The mortal suz! Marun, I'm glad you're thoughtful enough t' bring that. It's jest what I wanted; it'll bring us good luck!" came back to her ears with a sound as of a screech, and away flew the shoe after the vanishing figures among the trees.

The hours wore slowly away. Simeon read awhile, propped up in bed by pillows placed lengthwise against an inverted chair; he dozed in the intervals between spasms of violent coughing. Sometimes he talked, and as Marian listened to his curt, crisp, ironical sentences, she could scarcely believe him to be the helpless invalid he otherwise appeared.

"I dunno, skurs'ly, what course Malviny *will* take when I'm gone hence. 'Tain't safe t' bet on her, never!" with a slow smile.

"Ef she makes it her hum with Stellur Jane she'll be the same old drudge she is now. I ain't been so 's I could lighten her burdens much these twenty years back; but I can't seem t' find no great pleasure in picturin' her a-slavin' t' the whole Shepar'son tribe," he finished, with considerable feeling.

"I wouldn't worry about that," said Marian, soothingly. "I have made you some hot lemonade to drink."

"Thankee," sipping slowly. "I *think* more'n I say, Miss Stone. And I know Malviny better'n you do; it'll be jest like her t' try t' pull *them* all out of the rut— Oh, yes, they ain't paid f'r their land yit over toward the

court-house, no more'n we have. I hain't worried a grain 'bout *that* f'r years ; our intres' has been kep' up till the two years pas', and o' course they'll take back the place, and that'll be the end on't. Wall, we've had our livin' off it, sech as it's been.

"'Twould be my wish t' have Malviny go back to Ontario. She c'ld stay round some with the boys—they're all settled—and she has a brother, too ; Malviny won't be no moth in nobody's fam'ly. An' she never has taken t' Virginny from the first.

"I'm boun' t' say I like the country here. It's been a good frien' t' me ; an' I know I couldn't and wouldn't have lived a quarter of the time I have if I hadn't cleared out of Ontario. I know what the Basto breed is, Miss Stone. Mabbe they pull through the hard winter weather all straight, an' you think they're sure f'r a couple o' years longer ; but it's the spring, there, that's so tryin'; 'fore the leaves come out and the bobolinks git wonted off they go, jest as you blow out a taller candle."

"Shall I not read to you now ?" Marian asked, thinking to divert his mind from the melancholy tone his remarks were taking.

"Thankee, no. I've been itchin' t' git a chance t' talk over marters with ye f'r some time. It's the fust time I've been left alone, or I should a-sent f'r ye 'fore now. Malviny's taken proper good care o' me—I'll say that f'r her. But even she, and she knows the Bastos well enough, don't jest sense my case. She's so used t' seein' me a-barkin' an' grumblin' that she can't.

"I don't want none o' their ministers a-rootin' around here, afterward, a-tryin' t' scent brimstun', Marian ; I ask it as a favor of ye that ye'll see t' it. I don't fellership their talk none, and I can't afford none o' their prayers ; and I can't trust Malviny to carry out my

wishes in *this* respect. She'd do most anything f' me, but she can't help thinkin' that there's some p'rticular virtue about a funeral sermon. If *you* tell her I axed yer as a solemn favor she'd listen t' *you*."

"All your wishes shall be respected, Mr. Barstow. I promise."

"I knowed you would." A sweeter accent than usual trembled in Simeon's voice. "I guess if this cheer is taken out, now, I'll try to sleep some. It's gittin' on t'ward evenin'. Malviny ought t' be here b'fore long. Mabbe she *did* go on to the court-house; I never can bet on Malviny.

"Yes, Marian, I shall rest jest as well under old Virginny's sods, ef they ain't as green an' flourishin' as them in New York State."

XXIV.

GOSSIP.

"WALL, I didn't see him no gre't, but I knew I *could* 'thout takin' much trouble, an' he wur a mighty peac'ble neighbor. Wind's a-shiftin' 'roun' some; it's 'boun' ter b' colder. Wall, it's time f'r fallin' weather."

Josiah Crittenden was on his homeward way from the Barstow dwelling, whence Simeon had been borne to his last resting-place.

"I reck'n as how we none on us didn't 'preciate him 'nough. Dat's allers de way wid folks; we hes ter wait till they're dead 'fore dere good qual'ties bounces up and de odder sort falls under. It's a 'mazin' t'ing ter me,"

responded Cesar Peachy, carefully treading in the broad wagon ruts of the road, to render his walking easier.

"Wall, whether we've done well by folks or not, we can't change noth'n' arter they're gone—can't change noth'n' !" and Judah Harris followed Cesar's tracks in the soft red clay, idly noting the difference of the foot-print.

"I see all the women goin' in wid Dinah t' git warm ; come in, neighbors, all of you. 'Twas right smart cool f'r de time o' year a-standin' out dere. Come in, Judah," urged Cesar, turning to the doorway.

"Yis, Sist'r Dinah, it's a great 'fliction ter *me*," Jinsy was saying. "Goodman say him reck'n we'll hab ter shift ober ter Shepar'son's place. Dey been want'n' us ter move ober dar sence las' Chris'mus. Don' reck'n hit'll foller so fur. An' now Mr. Basto am gone 'tain't likely Mrs. Basto 'll stay dar alone."

Dinah nodded her turbaned head very impressively. "'Twon't make no stir ob diff'runce, Sist'r Jinsy. Does yer 'spec' dat de matter ob dem few miles am gwine ter bamfoozle *hit?* Cesar, he kin tell ye t'ings dat happ'n' in ole Mas'r Willum's time when de obstrep'rousest ob de slave folk was sent down ter Massissip. Heaps ob t'ings he's heerd fr'm dem as seen 'em wid dere own eyes."

"I ain't a-studyin' 'bout de *trufe* ob t'ings," muttered Jinsy, impatiently. "I don't keer 'bout seein' noth'n', b't-I'se 'bleeged ter, 'pears."

"Dar was onprincipl'd doin's in dem ole days on de Massissip plantashun," remarked Cesar, thoughtfully. "Ef yer was a high-strung nigger yer was toler'ble sure t' be sended down dar t' hab de kinks taken outen ye. Some, dey come back ag'in, an' some dey didn't. Dey tell dat 'pear'd like 'twas hebben up dere in ole Vir-

ginny, and down dar 'pear'd like 'twas hell.' Dey was fotched fr'm de swamps whar dey'd been hidin' an' starvin' jest a passel o' bones dat a fus'-class buzzard wouldn't a-wasted his strength on, noway. Some was hobbled, an' neber done no mo' plantin' arterward. When dey was a-totin' logs up de hill, an' a man seem sleepy like, his hade an' de log wus jest knocked t'gedder. Hants a plenty in dem days, Sist'r Jinsy !"

"Ob course," assented Jinsy, solemnly. "Dey has t' plague some one on dis yarth ef dey happ'n' ter be called off 'fore dere time. But," reflectively, "I'se didn't hab no han' in dese yer chilluns ob Sist'r Lucindy's gittin' dere warnin', an' 'pears dat hit ain't jest 'ligious doin's t' skeer us all so."

"Dere ain't noth'n' 'ligious '*bout* hants," decisively interjected Aunt Molly. "'Spec' dey'm sent t' warn us t' keep our lamp bright an' shinin' an' filled wid ile. Dey po' creeturs ain't a-gwine ter harm nobody. Mabbe dey'm lonesome like whar dey be, an' like t' keep clus' t' folks dey use fur t' know f'r comp'ny."

No objection was raised, immediately, to this interpretation.

"I 'member I *wus* skeered mighty bad, once," laughed Moses Robbins. "'Twas in my coltish days, an' I wus ruther keerless, like other young bucks, an' didn't git cotched in my pranks of'en 'nough ter tame me—mighty hard t' b'lieve dat yer, now de rheumatiz has tooken de spring outen me so ! Dar wus three ob us, an' we wus a-samplin' de egg-plum tree in de darkes' night I eber knowed. Yer couldn't see de white ob Jude Harris's eyes, and if ye couldn't cotch a glimmer ob *dem* yer might know '*twas* dark f'r sartain."

"Dat am certain so," laughingly assented Aunt Molly.

"Dat yer tree wus de ch'icest ob de orchard, an' we

knowed it. Hi! plums as big as a small tea-cup a-meltin' in yer mouth like sugar candy! Hit stood in de ole orchard by de souf woods, an' wus in de las' row, tol'ble clus' t' de woods. Dem woods wus known t' be haunted; some nigger 'd been lynched t' one de oak trees (b't dat yer wus 'fore my day)—I disremember his name now—b't ef he wus *half* as bad as he wus made out ter be he'd oughter been strung up ages afore he was.

"I'd shinned up de tree, an' wus throwin' 'em down lively, when ob a sudd'n we heerd a cur'us sort ob groanin' an' gruntin'—'peared ter spring right outen de groun' at de fut—but not a t'ing could we see, an' we strained our eyes mighty sharp a-tryin. Hi! de secon' groan dat wus fotched out fr'm *hit* dose boys took t' dar heels as lively as ef ole Satan hisself was flingin' his shoe arter 'em. I 'clar' I'se so skeered I couldn't eben holler as I heerd 'em a-clickin' away an' leavin' me t' b'ar de brunt ob hits fury. My miz'ble heart went thumpin' up an' down like an ole dasher churn.

"An' sudd'n I like t' fell outen dat tree, I lay back an' laughed so. Dey had foun' de plumpile, an' wus chankin' at 'em as nat'rally as ef in de trough. I 'clar' t' goodness ef de hant didn't turn inter mas'r's black Berkshire hogs! Dey e't up all de plums an' trotted away, as I c'd hear; I couldn't see 'em. An' I stayed an' filled myself wid plums, I reck'n, as calm as a summer night. I didn't let on arterward *what* 'twas, an' I got a rep'tation f'r bein' enrageous mighty cheap."

There was a general laugh, and the gloom on Jinsy's face lifted somewhat.

"I got right down sort o' skeery once myself," put in Josiah Crittenden, with a sidelong look at Uncle Moses. "'Twas in th' May month after Mis' Crittenden was took off, you knows, an' I happ'n'd t' be out ruther late. Nigh

's I kin make out 't mus' hev' been mighty well on t' midnight, when I happ'n' t' look overhead, an' thar, right over my head, was a ship a-sailin' the air, as solemn an' still as a sperit. Mons'ous big it looked in the bright moonlight, an' I stopped an' stared a minnit.

"Then I hurried right lively, an' didn't take no secon' look, I promis' you. I don't know how fur it sailed nor whar 't stopped. Ry'lene Carosene is so skeery I didn't tell her 'bout it, an' arterward I was glad I had sense 'nough to hold my tongue; f'r I happ'n' nex' day t' pass the teacher's house, an' I up an' axed her what mought she s'pose made it sail arter *me* so?

"'Oh,' she say, as pleasant an' cheerful, 'it was a 'bloon, Mr. Crittenden. I wish I had seen it. No doubt you would have seen some one in it if you had not been frightened.' Well, neighbors, thet's the wust sight ever *I* see. If all the sights turn out t' be as harmless as Moses an' mine, I reck'n they won't keep ye' wake o' nights.

"Well, I mus' be gittin' 'long. Pow'ful lonesome day it's been fur a-buryin', ain't it? The wind's cuttin' right sharp, I tell ye. Good-evenin', friends."

Dinah laughed softly as she stirred the fire to a readier blaze, and put over the bake-kettle. "I'se done glad t' have some comp'ny ter supper t'-night. 'Pears like we'se all too much 'clined ter stay ter home dese yer damp days. An' I reck'n a cup o' saxafass tea 'll cheer up Sist'r Jinsy pow'ful.

"Dar now, you Cesar, you'se done fotched in some quar'l wood f'r dis yer fire t'-night; an' I reck'n ef I've done tol' yer once I hev' a hundred times dat I don't want no quar'l wood a-snappin' an' a-snarlin' on *my* fire."

Cesar laughed. "I done say t' myself, when I cut

down dat ar' saxafass tree, 'Dinah'll hop roun' lively ef I fotch it home,' b't 'twas so pow'ful handy dat I wus 'bleeged f'r t' cut 't; it stood up befo' me right in de way ob my ax. We'll burn it 'fore witnesses, Dinah, an' I reck'n we sha'n't quar'l *dis* yer time." And he laid the sassafras boughs across the bricks which served for andirons.

"Look dar now," exclaimed Dinah, nodding her turbaned head, "it b'gins t' snap an' hiss like a tol'ble lively sort ob snake! I d'spise it, I tells yer."

"I ain't none 'fraid ob eber seein' ole Basto ag'in," Jinsy pensively observed, as she watched the writhing flames. "I've heerd him say mighty of'en he wur done sure he shouldn't fin' any *wuss* place dan dis yer, whareber he went to when he died, an' he wur cl'ar in his min' dat he neber want ter come back. I 'clar', I'se pow'ful glad on it!"

"Hi! him look jes' like his own shadder dese two years back," laughed Dinah, cheerfully, as the fumes of supper pervaded the room. "An' I don't reck'n dat Mis' Basto'd be skeered ef he did come back; she'd jes' shake her fist at 'im de usual way, an' ax 'im what he wanted ob her?"

"Dar's *some* folks as it's no sorter use ter arger wid 'bout dese yer sights," observed Aunt Molly, pathetically, "an' our Miss Maryon am one."

"Well, what's de use ob tryin'?" put in Judah, testily. "What's de use? White folks' ways ain't our ways 'tall. Let eb'ry one b'lieve as dey likes—as dey likes."

"I neber sot out ter arger wid unb'lievers noway, whedder white folks or black," mildly observed Cesar. "It am suah 'nough f'r me dat I knows what I knows—"

"Dat's so," assented Judah, hastily.

"An' when any po' ignorunt body tells me dat t'ings ain't as I knows 'em ter *be*, why, dey mought as well tell me I ain't born; one fac' 'll b'ar d'nyin' jes' 's well 's de odder. An' I don't go f'r t' pretend t' 'count f'r eider one."

"Dat you don't," Dinah serenely added. "B't set up an' hab some supper, an' ye can carry on two trades —eatin' an' talkin'—at once, I reck'n."

"I wus knowin' t' a mighty cur'us t'ing once myself," slowly said Aunt Molly, as she sipped her sassafras tea. "I disremember jes' how many year ago 'twas; 'twas arter de 'mancipation, an' de fightin' were over a longish spell. I war ober in Powhatan ter Miss C'r'line's fam'ly, a-stayin' on while de cook wus sick. I did it as a favor ter Miss C'r'line, an' she said it 'bleeged her pow'ful.

"Mas'r Willum Blackhead wus tooken off while I wus dar. Ye know, Dinah, we used ter call him so 'case his ha'r was black as a coal, ter 'stinguish him from ole Mas'r Willum. I knowed dar wus trouble o' some sort in de house 'fore he died, b't ob course I neber axed 'bout it ob de servants, an' de cook wus s' full ob de miz'ry in her chist dat some days she didn't sense noth'n' noway. I'd tooken my 'Tildy wid me ter wait on me an' wash dishes, like, an' she'd been ober of'en 'nough befo'. All de chilluns, both white an' black, used ter play t'gedder, an' whar dey went de mos' wus t' a gully back ob de corn house, wid a log lyin' crosswise in 't, and bricks a-lyin' roun' as ef dey'd been dryin' in de sun. De chilluns would stay hours dere pilin' up housen an sech like. Arter Willum Blackhead was tooken ye couldn't a hired dem chilluns t' go near dat yer gully nohow. Dey'm mighty foolish creeturs, chilluns are, anyway.

"Willum was laid out in de norf chamber, an' I wur a-settin' up in de nex' room de night 'fore de fun'ral, a-med'tating on de trouble dere is in mos' houses, when I seemed t' fall inter a sort ob dozin' sleep, an' dere he stood whar I could see him clus', jes' as smilin' an' nateral as I eber see him in my life. I wa'n't startled a grain.

"'Dat you, Willum Blackhead?' I axed. 'What for 'm I settin' up yere, an' you a-stan'in' dere a-laughin' at ole Molly?'

"An' den he smile more dan befo'. Says he, 'I want ter speak t' yer, Aunt Molly. I want yer ter 'member an' ax 'Tildy t' p'int out ter yer whar dat yer log used f'r t' lay in de gully. She will 'member, I t'ink; an' den she mus' p'int out de spot t' my mother.'

"An' I 'clar' ter you, neighbors, ef I didn't wake up den, an' 'twas cl'ar in my min' what all de frettin' in de house f'r months had been 'bout. Ye see, missis had buried her silver during war time, and 'twas in dat yer p'tic'lar gully under de dead tree; I'd seen it a hundred times, an' de chilluns 'd rid it f'r hosses, an' no one s'pected 'twas ob any p'tic'lar 'count. Somehow dey'd moved it c'nsidable out ob whar it used ter be; rolled it cl'ar 'long, an' so when de ladies wanted de silver ag'in it wa'n't ter be foun' nohow. Missis she say 'twas de Yankees done fin' it an' take it away, an' she fretted 'bout it 'mazin'.

"Miss C'r'line say arterward dem goblets wer ober a hunder years old, an' dey wus mighty heavy."

"Did 'Tildy 'member whar de log used f'r t' stan'?" asked Dinah.

"At fus' she couldn't think noth'n' 'bout it. I tried eb'ry way I knowed t' make her mem'ry spryer. An' den I cut a peach switch an' tol' her I'd hev' ter see if

de ile ob de peach wouldn't sof'en up her idees. 'Twas s'prisin' t' fin' how dat yer rem'dy b'gun t' work 'fore I had a chance ter use it," with a reminscent chuckle of delight, which set them all laughing also.

"Molly couldn't a-fotched a blow," crisply said Judah. "I do all dat, an' allers did. Molly 's too easy, too easy !"

"She went to de spot, as I telled yer, an' reck'n'd it mought b' *yere* de log stood. An' den she look a little roun', an' wus done sartain it wur. An' so de ladies foun' she wur right when ole Scip, de gard'ner, b'gan ter dig down. *Eb'ry* piece come up dat went down in de red clay so many years agone. I've of'en t'ought it were 'mazin' cur'us, dat yer dream o' mine."

"Dat it wur," echoed Dinah, "mighty cur'us an' solemn like. I'm mighty apt ter wake up a-laughin' from mine. 'Pears I'd like a serious dream f'r once, myself."

"De Presb'ter'an preacher dat Miss Maryon hab got ter come down here on 'count ob civ'lizin' *us*," laughed Judah, "am sot like a flint 'g'inst dese yer rev'lations. Him say no sech t'ings eber happen. Him come ter do way wid our ign'rant b'liefs. Hi, Cesar ! I up 'n axed him ef he b'lieved in de rev'lations in de Bible, an' him say, 'Yis, ob course ; but dat wus f'r special seasons in the libes ob de people in dose yer days, an' didn't 'ply now at all.' An' I tol' him dat his reasonin' didn't 'pear reason'ble t' *me*. Ef de Bible doin's wur true once dey wus apt ter be true now. An' he neber said a word 'bout de matter sence t' me."

"Miss Maryon *means* well," laughed Dinah, cheerfully. "An' I s'pose an eddicated man can set out de gospel in more genteel shape f'r us ; b't dar, we uns c'n sense r'ligion better ef we takes it in de way we 'se used t'

it. I'm a mighty po' creetur t' change de fashion ob my r'ligion."

"Dat's so," assented Molly, heartily. "When Brudder Dan'l prays we all knows jes' what he means. An' we ain't gwine ter stan' in our own light, neider. Miss Maryon ask will we go t' hear *her* minister ter favor *her?* I say yes, ob course, ef he preach when *our* meet'n' ain't held. I knows he am pow'ful keen man; him come straight fr'm Lincoln, whar dey turn out preachers eb'ry day jes' as easy as de gris'-mill in high water grin's our corn."

"An' dar ain't one so black in dis yer county as Mr. Sam'lls is," laughed Dinah. "I used ter t'ink de right-down black folks couldn't get l'arnin' like de white folks an' de yaller men. Dat yer am one ob my ign'rant b'liefs dat de Presb'ter'ans am boun' f'r t' obercome, I s'pose."

"Wall, I'se pow'ful fond ob Miss Maryon," put in Jinsy, emphatically. "I'd do mos' anyt'ing on dis yarth f'r her, dat I would. She's been so good t' de chilluns in eb'ry way. An' now she's gwine f'r t' sen' Kitty Cuttydash her own self ter Hampton. She'm mighty smart in her books a'ready, an' she'm l'arnin' as fas' ter be ready when Miss Maryon say de word. T' t'ink dat Jinsy hab raised up a teacher in her own fam'ly am 'nough t' make one proud, hi, Sist'r Dinah?

"An'," thoughtfully, "I *mos'* done suah I'd turn Presb'ter'an ef de teacher wanted me to. But Mr. Sam'lls won't preach it inter me, I'll be boun'!"

"Dat he won't, Sist'r Jinsy. I s'pose we mus' all ob us turn to an' help him t' settle his house. Him say de cage ain't fine 'nough yit f'r his little wife, when I ax him why he done bring her yere 'mong us. 'Spec' she too fine lady den f'r *us* ter' soshate wid," good-naturedly observed Dinah.

"I don't keer ef she be. I'll holp him f'r Miss Maryon's sake, if at all," said Jinsy, rather curtly. "An' wheder de Presb'ter'ans b'lieve in hants or not don't matter a grain t' Jurdan an' me. We *knows*. An' we jes' don't 'tend f'r t' ax Mr. Sam'lls 'bout that nor noth'n' else."

They laughed at Jinsy's vehemence.

"Dar wus my kinfolk, Jasper, an' his wife," sighed Cesar.

"Yis," echoed one after another. "Dar wur Jinny, sure 'nough, po' creetur!"

"Ef dar ain't no jedgmen's ob de Lawd *now* what wur *dat*, den, Cesar?"

XXV.

JASPER'S WIFE.

Uncle Ned Twitchel stood in the doorway of the store at "Wilkson's Shop" in Lodore. Evening was closing in. He had lingered, patiently waiting for another "treat," until his experienced judgment in such matters assured him that no further opportunities would be offered him. "Time ter git, I 'spec'," he muttered, as he laboriously mounted his beast for the homeward ride.

"Yer gwine? Le' me hol' yer bundle till yer am h'isted," said an acquaintance standing idly near.

"'Bleeged ter ye. I'se done got de rheumatiz pow'-ful dis season; been s' much fallin' wedder lately dat de damp hab sort o' got groun' inter my ole bones, an' dar

it hangs night an' day a-twitchin an' rackin' me 'mazin' hard, an' I can't 'pear ter git shet ob it. I knows it done boun' t' wear me outen de worl' some day, suah."

"Look out dar, ole man, yer don't mean f'r ter jerk dat mool roun' in no sech fashion as dat. She'm boun' f'r ter lan' yer in some ditch 'fore yer reaches Jones' Trac', an' whar'll yer bones be den?"

A good-natured laugh went around the group.

"She am de catty-corneres' sort ob beast dat eber I wur 'flicted ter own, dat she am," began Uncle Ned, with a grieved expression on his wrinkled face, which provoked another round of laughter. As if seeking to interrupt the recital of her misdeeds, the mule suddenly started at full speed along the highway, jerking her master indecorously backward.

"I done hopes de ole man'll hab sense 'nough ter turn inter de fores' road when he reaches it. Wonder why him set 'pon tradin' t' Lodore when dar am two sto's nearer by? He sartain suah c'n put a heap ob whiskey outer sight 'mazin' fas'."

"So he kin; dat's so; mighty peart ole man," ran around in a gentle chuckle of genuine admiration for Uncle Ned's chief accomplishment.

"I reck'n him mighty lonesome sence de ole lady wur tooken," observed a quiet, gray-faced man, holding his red clay pipe in abeyance with his teeth, while interjecting his conversational mite. "An' he don't hitch along ob Jasper's folks bery well, dey say, which 'counts fur his hangin' 'roun' at de sto'. Jinny Twitchel am a high-flyer, she be, an' nat'rally de ole man's apt ter be aggervatin'."

The old man, or his beast, had sense enough to turn into the forest road. As he slowly journeyed on, for the mule had dropped her brisk pace for a walk long before,

the woods had an awesome look, almost, they were so gray and silent. The overhanging boughs on either side seemed reaching strangely attenuated arms to clutch at him. The wood-mosses along the way stealthily deadened the sound of hoofs, and then the path itself grew dimmer, and all around was one gray uniformity, and finally Uncle Ned, still grasping his package of bacon, slipped quietly off his steed, which journeyed home without him.

The wind rose about midnight, and the rain descended in fitful swirls; then a shower of hail pattered on the sleeper under the hickory. The storm strengthened to a steady pour, and still he stirred not. Nibb's Creek rose swiftly, and in an incredibly short time the idle and shallow brooklet changed to a foam-flecked, turbid torrent, rushing along its narrow channel with the roar of a river. It widened as it spread over the lowlands along its banks, uprooting oats and rye and many a garden plot of cabbages, and bearing its spoils rapidly away.

"Sukey done come home in de night an' went inter de stable, as sensible as a chile. B't I dunno whar my ole daddy got lef' behin'," said Jasper the next morning.

"Ob coorse he got lef' at de sto'. It's jes' like 'im t' stay a puppose, an' I'se mighty sot on habin' some bac'n for my mornin' eatin's. Ef he hab ter hoof it back fr'm Wilkson's shop, I 'spec's he'll be suah ter hitch dat yer Suke nex' time, 'stid ob trustin' her ter wait hersilf." Jinny took up her baby with a placidity which somehow irritated the "weaker vessel."

"All I know 'bout it, Jinny, is dat ef he hab ter foot it fr'm dar y'll hab a right smart chance o' nursin' arterward. De ole man's broke up pow'ful, an' it done rain bar'ls las' night."

"I don't 'spec' t' fret none 'bout nursin'," serenely replied Jinny. "Not dis yer mornin'. Dar, hush yer racket, you boy. Dis young un gwine f'r t' howl jes' like all de res' ob de Twitchel tribe. He's done certain struck de note a'ready." Jinny's eyes gleamed maliciously as she deftly tossed the teething child from one brawny arm to another, crooning a melancholy lullaby :

"'Dar, hush now, mammy's b'y.
Oh, don't yer cry now, don't yer cry!
Ole mam 'll come back bam-by,
Bam-by fr'm Vaudoo lan',
De blessid Vaudoo lan'!'

"Why, yere's yer ole daddy, Jasper, a-limpin' 'long mighty slow. An' I sh'll hab a slice ob bac'n wid my John Constant, arter all. I'm pow'ful glad ter see ye, daddy, ef '*tis* sort o' late 'n de mornin'. 'Pears yer parted comp'ny wid Sukey in de night; p'raps she wasn't p'lite 'nough t' wait f'r ye?" Jinny's eyes shone with a satirical light, but her voice was mild.

"I done parted wid somefin' else, I reck'n, as ye'll keer more f'r dan de p'liteness ob dat spec'al mool critter," said Uncle Ned, sinking wearily into one of the two chairs the cabin contained.

"Whar's de bac'n yer went for?" suddenly inquired Jinny, eyeing his pockets suspiciously.

"Dat's de bery question I been axin' myself all de way home, eber sence I picked up dis ole nigger out dat sof' bed he slep' in all night. Whar's my bac'n? 'Twus two poun' side meat I traded off p'tater ingens f'r, an' I grip onter it mighty clus'. 'Spec' some varmint holped itself ter my good meat. It wur de fault ob dat toddy dat made me so drowsy; de toddy wur 'mazin' strong f'r me dat yer time, I 'low, Jinny."

Uncle Ned dozed off even while speaking, and Jasper, standing by, eyed him critically: "I tell ye, Jin, 'twon't be *dis* week nor yit anoder 'fore daddy gits ober dis yer pull." And Jasper was right. Uncle Ned lay for weary weeks thereafter in the agonies of rheumatic fever.

The nursing Jinny afforded him was so slight that even the "weaker vessel" rebelled at last, declaring that his "ole daddy shouldn't be lef' ter die;" and, with a mysterious enjoinder of secrecy, he dictated a letter to a married sister living in Richmond, Miss Marian being the scribe.

In truth, Miss Marian's beneficence brooded over all the aged and suffering for miles around. Uncle Ned's sole pleasure, till his daughter arrived, was to watch for the teacher's weekly visits. Always she bore some dainty prepared for the failing appetite. She brightened the dingy cabin in various ways. She brought downy pillows for his aching joints, and a few pictures to hang where his eyes could rest on them, and a white coverlet for his bed. All these attentions cheered the drooping spirits. He called her "a good angel in de flesh," and when she read to him some simple Bible story, with frequent pauses to interpret the ancient speech so puzzling to Uncle Ned, it appeared to him sometimes as if she grew to look exactly like the Madonna in the print upon the wall.

And then Sally Ann came, bringing her child, Sabra, a slim girl of ten, to wait upon her grandfather, and the old man's contentment was increased, though his pains were not lessened.

"Jinny and Sally Ann don't hitch hosses wuth a cent," he complained to Marian. "I 'spec's one'll hab ter be boss, an' de oder'll hab ter cl'ar out. Dar now,

I sha'n't done go t' trabble roun' no mo'. I'se waitin', jes' waitin', an' de quarlin' 's what hurts."

"An' I'll tell my fadder dat yer eats up de nice t'ings de white ladies brung jes' f'r him," he overheard Sally Ann retort to one of Jinny's threats. "Oh yes, I'm gwine away. I can't lib yere no longer. Dis yere cabin ain't big 'nough t' hol' Jinny an' me both, let alone Jasper. Jasper used ter be somefin' ob a man. It's Jin yere an Jin dere, till I comes t' b'lieve dat Jin hab sort o' swallowed him up, an' dere ain't nobody *but* Jin."

The altercation became fierce, and at his wife's bidding Jasper seized his sister by the wrists. Uncle Ned vainly strove to raise himself, and fell back groaning. Sabra bent over him. "Tell dem it's sech a shame t' quar'l. I reck'n yer mammy'll hab ter go back ter Richmon'."

"Oh yes, I'm gwine, certain suah 's yer am born," gasped Sally Ann; "b't I'll tell ye fus' how dey e't up all de cakes an' de ice-cream and de jelly yistiddy, an' yer neber knowed dat yer *hed* any sech dainties in de cubbo'rd yander."

"Kill her, Jasper, kill her!" called Jinny, with her baby at her breast.

Sabra burst out crying. Jasper flung away his hold, "You two women are fools, f'r suah."

"Only Jasper's wise," sang Jinny, in a mocking tone, as she rocked her baby in her arms.

"I'm gwine away now, fadder. Yer sees yerself dat it's onpossible t' stay yere no longer. B't I'll leab Sabry t' take a sort ob keer over ye, t' run arrints f'r ye. She's a mighty keerful gal ob her age, an' she'll holp a'most as well as me."

The days wore away more quietly after Sally Ann's departure. The cabin, like most on the large planta-

tions, was isolated from neighbors. Jinny was a sociable soul, and she fretted in the solitude. With her baby on her arm, she would leave the cabin's occupants to care for themselves the entire day, while she roamed from one acquaintance to another, rehearsing her enmities and extolling her own forbearance. Jasper betook himself "to de sto'" more frequently than the family needs required, or bethought himself of waiting jobs near centres of talk.

Sabra had no time to be melancholy or lonely. In her childish way she sought to keep her grandfather comfortable. She was a patient child withal, and if her slight arms ached over her unwonted labor, she refrained from mentioning it. Jinny took advantage of this trait to such an extent that all the washing of clothes and scrubbing of the scanty furniture and floor were performed by this willing mite.

With all menial offices discharged upon these tiny shoulders, and her coveted leisure to roam secured, Jinny hated her. She hated her for the patient way in which she bore abuse, for the silence in which she ate her crust, burned black, and formerly bestowed on the dogs, and did not ask for a share of the meat in the skillet. Daily she dinned into Jasper's ear the fact that Sabra was left there by Sally Ann as a spy upon their conduct to Uncle Ned.

"She mus' be made ter cl'ar out. I c'n do for daddy all he needs. I can't 'ford ter keep young creeturs f'r Sally Ann."

Spite and meanness of soul grow by what they feed upon, like any other passion. In this uncultured soul there were no civilizing processes, as the law of kindness was absolutely unintelligible. She began to refuse Sabra food when it were possible, to hide remnants from meals

lest she feed on them slyly, until Sabra complained openly.

"I'll work all yer want me ter, Jinny, b't I can't starve."

"Hear her, Jasper!" The malicious light shone in Jinny's eyes. "Help yerself, Sabry; dar's m'lasses in dat bottle an' yere's a Georgy bisc'it." And the child, ignorant of satire, accepted literally the mock invitation.

Then Jasper's eyes flashed; he was inordinately greedy of sweets, and grudged a share of any, even to Jinny.

Poor little Sabra! Uncle Ned called her in vain. The long-abstained-from dainty was only clutched more eagerly in the slender fingers.

"Sabry, Sabry, I wants yer, chile! Dis yer brick ter my foots hab got stun'-cold, suah."

"I'se yere now, grandaddy."

"Sabry," with an earnest look into her wondering face, "don't yer go fur t' eat no mo' m'lasses; 'tain't egzackly healthy f'r ye, d'ye understan'?"

"My mudder gibs me all I kin eat," pouted the child. "I wish I wur hum ag'in."

"An' you sh'll go, honey, right away. My little gal sh'll go back ter Richmon'. 'Tain't no place yere f'r ye, tell yer mammy. M'lasses ain't healthy f'r ye in de kentry. Grandaddy says so."

Jinny, crooning in one corner to her baby, interrupted herself to say, "It's time ter go ter de spring; de bucket's done been empty dis hour. An', Sabry, ef yer am ter cl'ar out f'r good yer may tote two buckets fus' I reck'n."

Sabra laughed pleasantly at the joke. "I done reck'n I'll hab time ter say 'good-by' fus', Jinny, 'fore I set out f'r Richmon'. 'Spec's de kyars won't haul up yere

dis ebenin' ter carry me dere." And grandaddy joined in Sabra's mirth at the idea. But Jinny's face was glum as she rocked her baby on her lap.

Sabra took up the bucket, laying the gourd dipper down on the bench by the doorway. "How dese yer gourds do las'! I wonder ef I dropped one right hard on de floo' ef 'twould done break?"

"Yo'd bes' not try dat," smiled grandaddy. "Yo'd be wantin' a drink, ef '*twas* smashed."

"Good-by, Jinny, till I sees yer ag'in," saucily sang the mite, tripping away with the bucket poised on the woolly head.

Uncle Ned dropped off in sleep. In the night he was startled by an unusual noise—the gourd dipper slid from the water-pail to the floor.

"Oh, dis miz'ry 'n my bones!" he murmured. "I can't turn myse'f in de bed. I can't see noth'n' in de dark. Ef dar wur a winder to let in de starlight 'twould be a great condition t' dis cabin. Miss Maryon say she neber could unnerstan' why colored folks shouldn't build winders to dere housen same 's white folks.

"'White folks ain't 'bleeged f'r t' t'ink ob de cheapness ob t'ings,' I say; b't she smile back, '*Sometimes* dey are, b't dey *will* hab winders.' An' den she say, 'Arter all, Uncle Ned, ef we has winders in our souls, so de blessed light ob hope an' love an' good-will to all c'n shine inter 'em, dat are glory 'nough f'r us,' an' I done b'liev' her, suah.

"An' I up an' say, 'Miss Maryon, is dat de rale true Presb'ter'an doctrin'? Ef so, I'se ready f'r t' turn inter a Presb'ter'an t'-morrer.' She laugh like a summer mo'nin', 'I dunno, Uncle Ned. It *ought* ter be. It is Christ's doctrin', an' dat's 'nough f'r ev'rybody.'"

Uncle Ned's speculations consumed the night. Jinny

arose from her pallet and began the morning preparations for breakfast. As she brought his portion to the bed the old man questioned her sharply :

" Whar's Sabry? Why don't she brung it as usual? I hain't seed noth'n' ob her dis mo'nin'."

" Nor I neider," said Jinny, avoiding his gaze. " I dunno whar she am. I 'spec's she runned off t'ward Richmon' in de night."

" An' I shouldn't blame her ef she did," tartly responded the old man. " Why, yer didn't make up her pallet! War'n't yer 'spectin' her ter stay t'-night?"

Jinny busied herself over the fire, and pretended not to hear him.

" Dis ole man know dat chile neber gwine f'r ter foot it thirty mile ter Richmon'," he muttered, uneasily. " Whar dey driv' her off ter I mus' fin' out.

" One ob yer wur dreffel keerless in de night when ye took a drink, f'r ye let de dipper drap an' neber stop ter pick it up," he remarked, when Jinny came his way again.

Such a look as Jinny shot at him—imploring, beseeching, questioning. Uncle Ned was almost sure he saw her shiver, and a nameless dread fell on him in the silence which succeeded. He asked no more questions regarding Sabra.

That night he noticed that Jinny took the gourd from the pail and laid it on the bench beside it. He mused long over this unusual proceeding, with no enlightenment. With the morning light he looked curiously toward the bench ; the dipper lay on the floor. And this time he was quite sure that Jinny shivered as she stooped to pick it up.

At last Jinny had a grievance that she could not share. The days wore away in that lonely cabin, and

every weary day was followed by a dreaded night. Baby crowed and cooed with small notice of his blandishments. He grew to miss his evening lullaby. Grandaddy grew steadily feebler. Oh, the little tragedies in these lives of ours, hidden, unsuspected, away from the gaze of men!

It was noticed that Jasper eyed Jinny sometimes with a look of fear, and that a strange meekness appeared to have settled on Jinny's truculent spirit.

"De snow do look pow'ful lonesome, suah," pensively remarked Jinny one evening. "An' yer daddy am moanin' so wid pain, dat 'pears ter me, Jasper, y'd better ride ober f'r de doctor. I kin wash f'r 'im ter pay for 't, an' I'll b' glad ter."

"Dat am right good in yer, Jin, an' I'll go, suah 'nough." Jasper looked pleased at Jinny's interest in his old father.

"I can't b'ar t' hear him takin' on so wid de miz'ry. An' I dunno what t' do."

"Yer won't go t' de sto', nor noth'n', Jasper? I hates ter stay 'lone."

"Why, you ain't lef' 'lone, Jin. Daddy an' baby's yere. B't I'll come back 'mejit I sees de doctor."

"Ride fas', Jasper!" calls out Jinny from the doorway, as he clatters past on Sukey; "'fo' de day break yer daddy mus' hab holp."

"Yis, sar, him bery bad indeed," in answer to the doctor's inquiries.

"I don't see how I can go out again to-night, Jasper. I'll give you some medicine for the old man, and I'll be over early in the morning—by sun-up. Bathe him in this lotion and rub it in well with a warm flannel—got any flannel, Jasper?"

"Jinny hab de baby's petticuts, sar, which am ob flannel cloth."

"Good as anything. Rub it in as long as he can bear it. I've been riding all day, and I'm right smart tired. I'll be over by sun-up. Nasty weather, this snow."

Jasper turned Sukey's head homeward. A sharp wind scurried through the moist, swiftly falling snowflakes, and moaned dismally through the patches of pines as he traversed them. He descried here and there a lonely cabin like his own, but no light flickered through the log-chinks in any one of them.

Once he dismounted to knock at a hare scudding wearily through the gathering drifts; it eluded him, and, no one being nigh, he cursed the shrinking creature heartily.

As he did so he started back as if he had received a blow; the affrighted eyes seemed pitifully pleading, and in some strange way the eyes were those of Sabra.

A cold sweat covered him, and his knees knocked together, and his tongue seemed to shrivel in his mouth as he vainly tried to call aloud her name.

"Sukey, Sukey, stan' still, you beast!" But Sukey seemed to have donned her contrary mood; she turned around several times uneasily, and then suddenly, as Jasper regained his seat, shot forward.

"For what is our little life but vapor?" It was singular how persistently that passage repeated itself in his mind as he rode along. "It mus' be de way de teacher hab wid her readin' ter make it stick so. I don't hear no preacher read so bootiful as Miss Maryon."

"O Jasper, daddy's mighty poorly. I kin rub dis yer lin'ment on, I reck'n, widout wakin' him; he's sorter dozed off quiet at las'." But when they stooped over the bed to turn back the covering they discovered that Uncle Ned had no need of their appliances; what were

"lotions" to one who had slipped from the pain-spent body into the eternal silence?

Jinny's face wore a look of genuine distress. She wrung her hands as she gazed at the still face: "O Jasper, Jasper, I didn't 'spec' he gwine f'r ter go so soon," and she burst into violent sobbing.

"Daddy wur ole, an' we mus' 'spec' fur de ole ter be tooken," answered phlegmatic Jasper. "Why, Jin, I neber knowed afore dat you'd sot yer heart t' keer so pow'ful f'r my fadder. I done hear ye say a hundred times he wur in yer way. I reck'n he heerd yer, too."

"I done wish he'd a-stayed longer, Jasper. I'd got 'roun' ter be mighty good t' him, I had. An' he wur a good daddy t' us always."

"So he wus, Jin. Pow'ful good!"

The day of the burial Sally Ann arrived, her face a study of conflicting emotions. "'Pears yer wus boun' ter bury my fadder widout takin' de trouble t' git word t' me, so's I kin see him once mo'! But de Lawd's han' was in 't; I sees Brudder Twine in de street yistiddy mo'nin', an' I 'quire special 'bout you all. I'se 'bleeged ter. Oh, I'se foun' out a heap o' s'prisin' t'ings! An' whar's my Sabry? I wants my gal, Jasper. I wants noth'n' t' say t' Jin, noway. I 'dress myself t' you, Jasper."

"We s'posed she war wid you, Sally Ann. She an' Jin neber hitched bery well, an' she done cl'ar out one night an' lef' us."

"I won't b'lieve it. She neber come back t' me. She wouldn't dare run off in de night no more'n dat yere baby. I'll see her no mo'! I'll see her no mo'! Yer druv' her away, Jasper, dat yer did, and de wolves hab picked her bones, my little innercent Sabry!"

Jinny cowered in her corner, weeping.

"Oh hush, now, Sally Ann, dat fool-talk!" said Jasper, impatiently. "Yer knows dar ain't no wolves 'tween yere an' Richmon'. I'se sick o' hearin' sech trash!"

"Ye'll b' sicker yit 'fore ye die, Jasper. I'll see her neber no mo'! B't ef ye've laid a straw in my chile's way I prays ye may see her eb'ry day ob yer lives, an' dat yer may live long, long, long—long 'nough ter 'pent ob all yer sins a t'ousan' times over!"

With this parting wish fiercely flung over her shoulder, Sally Ann strode swiftly away. She stopped over night with her cousin Cesar, partly to refresh her weariness, but chiefly to "open up her heart" of its surging burden of angry grief.

"Not one hour c'd I stay in dat house. 'Pears like I c'd see dat de curse wur workin'. Oh, ef I c'd see my fadder one minnit ter ax him! Cesar, did him eber say a word ter yer?"

"Only once. I lay it ter 'count ob his dozin' like. 'Twill make ailin' folk talk silly like, yer knows. Says he, 'I sleeps an' I *don't* sleep, Cesar. An' I sees a many t'ings. Dar's a jedgment a-comin'!' But I dunno what he meant."

"I does, den. An' I knowed it wur a-workin'." Sally Ann's eyes shone. "I kin 'ford ter le'be it all ter de Lawd, Cesar."

"Dat's so. Ole Mas'r neber makes no mistakes. An' all de odds ob life come out evens in His han'."

XXVI.

JINNY'S "RETRIAL."

"De peach trees hab blowed out mighty peart, Jin. Reck'n 'twould do yer a heap o' good ef yer made up y' mind t' take a walk out. Why can't yer hoof it to de sto', an' I'll see ter de baby, suah 'nough."

Jinny shook her head, listlessly. "I don't seem ter want t' go, Jasper. I c'dn't be cotched out arter dark, ye know, an' I don't 'pear t' keer 'bout goin' anywhar lately, or 'bout seein' nobody."

"I knows it, Jin," said Jasper, sadly. "I seed yer hab fell away 'mazin' sence daddy lef' us. Yer looks as ef y'd had a fit o' sickness, suah. 'Tain't jes' nat'ral f'r young folks ter hive up in de chimbley corner same 's you've tooken t' doin'."

"Oh hush, man, hush, I tell yer! What wur dat yer sister Sally Ann said: 'Ye'll b' sicker 'fore ye die.' Wall, dat's so. Yer ought ter be glad ef I *c'ld* die; mabbe de curse would git shooken off me den."

Jasper said no more. Presently she resumed:

"Sally Ann's allers been known as a witch. De minnit I seed her face dat day I knowed de hag-fit wus on her. Her eyes wur so blazin' hot dey fairly scorched mine, an', Jasper, I couldn't meet 'em ag'in."

"Sally ain't no witch now; she done got 'ligion years ago," said Jasper, mildly. "I don't set no gre't by her, I 'low, b't, Jin, she ain't no call t' set no gre't by us, hab she?"

Jinny shrank a little closer to the jamb, as if for protection. She made an effort to shake off the feeling of

abasement which she felt creeping over her, and for an instant the old malicious gleam quivered in her eyes. "I could tear her inter inch pieces," she hissed forth, with sudden fury, as the hot tears fell, drop by drop, on her baby's head.

The little fellow lifted his eyes in wonder. "Mammy neber loved little Ned s' well as now. An' I ain't done fit t' love ye none, I 'low."

"Ye neber wur so mild as now, Jin," interpreted Jasper, half in awe of his own words, "an' I reck'n dat true love is noth'n' b't mildness."

"Ef only I might hab a retrial, Jasper; ef I c'd sort o' be sot back ag'in whar I wur a year ago!"

Jasper shook his head. "We mus' g' on, I 'spec's, as we hab b'gun. 'Taint like stepp'n' ober t' a neighbor's an' back as we chuse, Jin."

"Can't yer see, Jasper, dat *hit's* what's wearin' all de flesh loose on my bones? Dar ain't no hour ob any day when I don't hear Sabry's voice: 'I'll say good-by fus', Jinny.' An' it's ten thousan' times I've heerd it a'ready, an' a year not gone yit! I can't b'ar it no longer, Jasper.

"No; you don't say noth'n', an' I knows yer can't. 'Yer *mus'* b'ar it, yer *mus'* b'ar it,' dat's what I hear night *an'* day. Whar do de words cum fr'm? Do dey spring up outen de groun' in de stillness?"

"Ef ye'd go away more out do'?" suggested Jasper, "as I does."

"Oh hush, man, hush! Dat's worser dan t' stay clus'. Eb'ryt'ing I see or hear—an' de rain an' de patter ob feet up an' down, oh, s' tired like!"

"How did yer mean, Jin, when yer said 'bout *trial?*" whispered Jasper, under his breath.

"Dar's gwine ter be a-baptizin' soon 's de weather

gits warmer, an' 'pears like, Jasper, ef I kin git through de water ag'in wid de new members, dat I mought shift dis yer weight off; ef I did I sh'ld know dat de Lawd wur gwine t' gib me a retrial. Oh, good Mas'r, I'd do better dan befo' ef y'd gi' me a retrial!"

"I dunno," said Jasper, doubtfully, "ef de church'd consent. 'Tain't 'cordin' t' de laws ob de church. B't we mought try it, Jinny. Ef *dat's* what yer meant, I hopes yer'll b' 'lowed t' try it."

There was a stir of excitement in Pleasant Grove Church one Sunday in June, when it became generally known that among the new members drawn up for the walk to the baptismal waters stood Jinny Twitchel. She stood unmoved at the suppressed murmur of voices of exclamation and inquiry. Her face told a tale of suffering, which appealed swiftly to the warm sympathies of a charitable people. The *need* for sorrow was quite forgotten in their efforts to appease the poignancy of the sting.

Large-hearted Dinah Peachy rose to the occasion. Appealed to on every side for particulars, as being of kin, and therefore certain to know, she wove, in a series of fragmentary whispers, a tale more thrilling than the quiet dames had ever heard before.

"Po' lam'!" "Po' creetur!" "Yis, we'se all boun' fur t' holp Sist'r Jinny shake off Satan." "Him got a mighty hard clutch on her, suah," were gratifying expressions to Dinah.

"We'll sing 'em to de water now," and the long procession began the half mile walk to the pond, singing in a jubilant, chanting tone, "We're a-gwine to de water f'r t' be baptized!" Over and over it rose, like the cry of an advancing army, as Miss Marian stood in her door and listened.

"How strangely it recalls the expression 'A multitude of waters!'" she murmured.

Reaching the pond they found the banks already crowded with spectators. It looked like a festal scene. The crisp glories of summer toilets of the young girls, hoarded for weeks for this occasion, spread like rainbow plumage around. Turbaned with white kerchiefs and draped, nun-like, with black, close clinging gowns, the converts of the previous year clustered in the rear.

Brother Daniel, with his white hair and many wrinkles and his robe, looked like a prophet descending into the water. A few remarks he addressed to each neophyte as he or she was handed down to his outstretched arms: "I bery glad, Brudder Luke, t' see you here; dese am de portals ob hebben!" "Oh, Brudder Willum, y've waited till de 'leventh hour, b't His mercy endureth f'rever!" "Oh, Sist'r Jinny, 'Come unto me all dat am *heavy laden*, an' I will giv' ye rest!'" All these remarks were interspersed with hymns of rejoicing, and consumed many hours; and as Jasper stood, a silent spectator, for the first time in his life he wished he were of the number coming up on the banks with happy countenances.

The year wore around to its harvest time. Jasper grew to fear entering his home, it was so silent and empty-looking. Like a shadow Jinny sat in her accustomed place, watching by turns the smouldering logs on the hearth and her toddling boy. She had an aged look—her face was wrinkled and her cheeks hollow; as she walked she bent over, as with the weight of years.

Jasper said to the usual polite inquiries: "Jin am right poorly wid c'nsum'tion. No, she don't hab no cough, an' she 'sist on't she well as eber; b't stan's ter

reason she am boun' ter drap off wid de fallin' leaves, onless she kin git holp soon."

Jinny offered no more objections to Jasper's frequent absence from home. There were corn-shuckings desirable to attend round about in the neighboring plantations. The year was rounding to its close with jollity and humble feasting and the garnering of precious grain; it was like a holiday, except for the lack of idleness.

"Oh, go ef yer want ter; it don't matter any more to me!" Jasper grew so used to hear Jinny say, that sometimes he forgot to ask her. If he thought of her amid the riotous mirth, it was chiefly to wonder how she *could* so resign herself to solitude and silent hours.

She went no more to her church. When Marian sought gently to persuade her that it was not right to drop all the old privileges once so highly prized, she answered, listlessly, "It don't do me no good. I can't git a holt on 'ligion 'nough t' save me. Dar now! I done *go* inter de water ag'in t' see 'f I c'dn't drap *hit* off. B't I c'dn't, Miss Maryon, I c'dn't. Mabbe 'twar'n't 'zackly Scripter t' be baptized twice. I dunno. I tried de bes' I knowed."

"I am sure you did, Jinny. It will all come right some day. I am sure of that."

"*Will* it, Miss Maryon?" The wan face uplifted eagerly. "*You* know a heap o' t'ings dat I can't see no b'ginnin' nor endin' to. B't I sha'n't lose *hit* in dis yer life, I feel sure. Sally Ann said—"

"There now, Jinny, don't repeat it. She doesn't know any more than yourself. I wish you could have a change of scene. Come to my house and stay awhile."

Jinny shook her head. "I don' want no change, Miss Maryon."

The teacher that evening sought to bring the new minister, Mr. Samuels, to her aid in this matter.

"I really think this is a case which calls for your utmost clerical skill. This human heart, in the depths of affliction, should be reached and saved to happiness. It is a case of utter and abject misery," she vehemently pleaded.

"It is a case of 'conjuring,' as they call it here. I know nothing of such matters, Miss Stone. When I see to what ignorant extremities my race can go, I feel like blessing the Providence which cast my birth and rearing in the North. I will do my best to reduce the mass of ignorance around me. I will preach Christ crucified to all who will come to hear. I will give of my substance to the needy. Can any more be reasonably exacted of me?" he finished, smiling.

"Nothing is 'exacted,' sir," she replied, somewhat curtly. "There is such a thing as soul sympathy, though you seem not to be aware of it. If you have a lot superior to that of these people, consider if it is not noble and kind to reach down from your height and draw them upward. They will not go to hear you preach, if this subtle bond between you be lacking."

"It must be 'lacking,' then," he said, good humoredly, "for there are very few who do come to my meetings. They appear to be afraid of me because I am not a Baptist. I can't *hire* them to come to my preaching."

"There are ways and ways," said Marian, sententiously, as she left him somewhat abruptly.

"Is there no one you can get to stay with Jinny?" inquired Marian of Jasper. "She is alone so much, and she appears to me very feeble."

"She am so f'r sartain, Miss Maryon; but Jinny won't

go f'r t' hab nobody. She say dey wouldn't stay long noway, an' she neber *am* 'lone neidder. Jin's *used* ter stayin', an' I'm gwine t' be home more now de shuck'n' am done. Mighty peart baby we hab dere, Miss Maryon! Little Ned's a heap ob comfort ter Jin."

The wind-swept forest leaves drifted into crimson and russet heaps on the ground. Jasper came home one day late in the afternoon to find the fire out and the baby sitting among the dead embers, crying with cold and hunger. He was angry at the sight of Jinny sitting with drooping head resting against the logside of the cabin, as if asleep, and unmindful of these common duties around her.

"Jin," he called out, roughly, "Jin!" He advanced and shook her, but she only fell over toward him with face still bowed, and a terror seized on Jasper as he laid her gently down on the rough floor.

"O good Mas'r," came from his trembling lips, "my Jin hab done gone an' lef' me! No need f'r a doctor ter tell me dat. Ned, little Ned! Come yere, chile, pap 'll wrap yer up warm an' see ter ye. Le' me git my breath fus'! I'se all in a quiver."

"I hopes now," Cesar said to him the following day, "dat Sist'r Jinny 'll git her new trial as she's done cross Jurdan. She wur a 'mazin' sufferer, suah."

"It's gwine t' be a stormy day f'r de buryin', I 'low, Cesar; b't 'twon't make no diff'runce t' Jin, as I knows on."

"Uncle Dan'll am sick wid az'my, Jasper, an' won't b' able ter induct de sarvices; b't I reck'n yer won't hab no 'jection t' Mr. Sam'lls, an' he say he glad ter do all he kin t' holp yer."

"No, Cesar, it don't make no diff'runce t' Jin. You git who you chuse."

"I dunno b't I'm ter blame 'bout dat yer sarmon," said Cesar, afterward, in a church council. "I c'nfess I was s'rprised when Brudder Sam'lls gin out f'r his tex', 'Jesus C'ris' came inter de worl' t' save sinners, of whom thou art de chief.' S'pos'n' one *hadn't* done quite right; 'tain't de time t' twit 'em ob it when dey lies ready f'r de grave. Sist'r Jinny was a sinner, suah 'nough, b't de way I look at it, Brudder Robbins, we mus' tell 'em ob it *when dey kin hit back*, or hol' our tongue."

"I don't see how you're t' blame, Cesar."

"Why, 'twas *my* pr'posal t' hab a Presb'ter'an buryin', as dere wa'n't no Baptist preacher handy by, an' dis yer am what comes ob it. Jasper, he wur snortin' mad, I tell ye, an' it's jes' dis: dey're my kinfolks, an' I pities 'em. I don't r'ally t'ink Jasper'd made dat row wid Sally Ann at de grave, ef he hadn't got sort o' riled up befo' on 'count ob dat Presb'ter'an tex'.

"An' how she come t' hear dat Jinny wur dead I dunno," he presently added. "I would a kep' de news fr'm her, b't she come pouncin' in jes' as we'd started f'r Jones's Trac'. 'I'll walk 'long o' ye, Cousin Cesar,' she say, 'as we bof' b'longs 'mong de mo'ners.' I giv' one glance at her face, an' see dat she meant mischief."

"I seed her a-work'n' an' edgin' 'roun' t' git clus' ter Jasper, when dey wur fillin' up de grave," put in a quiet voice behind Cesar, "an' when she hiss out, 'How does it wurk, Jasper?' den he burs' out in his fury:

"'How come *you* here, you witch? T' look 'pon yer pleasant work?'

"'Tain't done yit, Jasper, as *you'll* fin' out,' she smile back. I c'dn't feel t' blame de po' man f'r cussin' as dey led him away f'r fear he'd go f'r t' strike her."

"It wur an awful scene," said Cesar, solemnly. "I neber refused shelter t' a livin' soul 'fore dat night; b't I tole Sally Ann I c'dn't let her stay wid us."

"An' what'll Jasper do now?" queried several.

"I dunno. He's sort o' broke up so. Dinah she goes over t' do what she kin. S'pose he's in ole Mas'r's han's, like de res' ob us. He'll do wid him as He t'inks bes'."

XXVII.

"BRUDDER SAM'LLS'S HOUSEWARMING."

"I'se gwine up, Cesar, ter holp git t'ings fixed up in Mr. Sam'lls's house. He gone ter Richmon' dis day ter brung his wife down, Sist'r Molly say. An' de housewarmin' am comin' off dis ebenin'. Molly been up befo' t' see ter de scrubb'n' up, an' she say de fine furniture dat hab cum down am a sight ter see. Dare's an orgin, too, an' his wife is said ter play bootiful. An' we'se gwine ter hab a nice supper ready f'r 'em when dey come."

"I t'ought you'd hev' t' hol' up a spell, Dinah," smiled Cesar, good-naturedly. "Yer ain't 'customed f'r t' make s' long a speech widout breathing."

"Dar now, ole man, ef yer ain't sassy yer c'n cum up ter supper wid de res'," Dinah chuckled, as she hastened away. "Mr. Sam'lls say he wants a right-down ole Virginny housewarmin'."

"Hi!" mused Cesar to himself, as he sat by the fire

shaping a handle to fit his grubbing-hoe, "I 'spec's Brudder Sam'lls won't fit our Virginny ways an' customs ef he try de hardes' he kin. He am as black as any in dis lan', b't, somehow, he don't seem ter b'long t' us none. I can't diskiver de reason why. Dere's a passage ob Scripter dat fits de c'rcumstance, b't I disremember it jes' now. Dinah, now, is apter dan me; 'spec's she'd hitch onter it ef she wur here.

"I wonder ef de darkies up Norf am all dat style, same 's Brudder Sam'lls? It's a great condition f'r one ter be raised up Norf. I spec's I c'd stan' it right well dar—till de winter set in! I'd ruther hab one inch ob b'ar groun' in ole Virginny dan a ten-acre lot all kivered three foot deep wid snow up dere.

"I wonder ef Brudder Sam'lls t'inks we oughter bow down befo' him 'case he done got eddication an' hab sot hisself up higher'n we po' plantation han's? 'Pears like dar's somet'ing in de way he looks at us dat say, 'Yer c'n't pr'sume none on *dis* yer one.' An' Cesar am sartain suah not t' want ter."

From Cesar's revery it will be seen in what estimation the Rev. John Samuels was held by the colored people he had come to minister unto.

"A good man—a thoroughly good man," Miss Marian was fond of saying. "If you will *let* him he will help you."

But many did not feel inclined to "let him." They straggled in to his meetings, often merely at their closing exercises, that they might report such attendance to the teacher. He scrupled not to exhibit the annoyance he felt.

In turn, his bluff, straightforward manners annoyed their finer sense of the courtesy due one individual (as such) to another; in genuine politeness of manner these

Virginia negroes were superior to the Northern missionary.

Two years had elapsed since he came among them. He had purchased land and erected a pretty cottage and married, during this interval, a pretty yellow girl, with a slight figure, a springy step, and an amiable disposition. The little house was ablaze with light and merriment when the owners thereof came home.

"I 'clar', Sist'r Molly," whispered Dinah Peachy, after the uproar of arrival had subsided, "she sech a slim bird dat you or I would make forty ob her." Her face shone with suppressed laughter, and she vigorously polished it with a corner of her ample white apron.

"I c'd crush her 'thout *half* tryin'. I reck'n, dough, she ain't pow'ful skeerd les' I try; hi, Sist'r Dinah?"

"*We'll* take keer on her," answered Dinah, shaking her head emphatically. "She mighty peart gal."

"And now, friends and neighbors, we invite you all to supper." Mr. Samuels waved one long arm over the heads of those nearest him. "These good ladies have prepared us a feast indeed; their generous kindness I fully appreciate. Let us give thanks and partake of the abundance spread before us."

"Molly, Molly," whispered Dinah, excitedly, "does yer see my pair o' roast chick'ns anywhar? I 'clar' t' goodness I put 'em on de platter myself, right befo' Mr. Sam'lls's plate, an' de platter an' all am gone. 'Mazin' strange dat be!" She clutched Aunt Molly's gown and said, "Ax down a piece, b'low ye, an' see if any ob 'em c'n tell 'bout it?"

"Yis, yis," whispered Nanny Bangs; "I saw it all myself. While you wus shakin' han's wid de preacher's wife, a woman took dat platter off de table quick's a wink. I seed her go inter de pantry, b't coorse I

t'ought 'twa'n't fixed up t' suit her, or suth'n'." Aunt Dinah went swiftly to the pantry, without apology or excuse, and found the dish empty.

"Let's step out an' see ef we kin fin' her," whispered Nanny, who was young and spry, and who dearly loved a joke.

All was still outside. They paced around the dwelling. "Hush!" whispered Nanny, "don't you see a figure hurrying down dat hill ober yander?"

Dinah thought she did, but was not sure.

"Never min', Aunt Dinah. I'll race an' see who 'tis, an' you foller on as yer kin." Nanny was off like the wind.

"O chile, I'd give my best spread ef I c'd run like dat," panted Dinah, doing her best to keep within talking distance.

"What are you going so swift for? Stop, I say," called Nanny to the woman hurrying on still faster. "Why don't yer stop?" and racing up she fixed her vigorous claws in her woolly hair. "Dar now, Jane Morris, ye'll stop, I'se toler'ble suah, nex' time I axes ye. I seed ye at de minister's party. What yer gwine 'way for 'fore 'freshmints are served? De minister feel so mort'fied dat he sent me t' tell yer t' come back an' hab some roast chick'n wid him, suah."

"I much 'bleeged ter him f'r de invite," said Jane, folding her shawl still closer, "b't de chilluns am ailin' some, an' I promised I wouldn't stay long. Le' go my ha'r', please."

"Mus' I go back, den, an' tell de po' waitin' minister dat yer slights his invitation ter supper? Well, den, I c'n't hab de face ter do dat 'less ye gibs me de chick'ns t' tote back in yer place."

"*What* chick'ns? Yer mus' b' done crazy t' run an'

pull a woman's ha'r out her hade an' call f'r chick'ns! I ain't got no chick'ns 'cept dose on de roost."

"Aunt Dinah" (to that worthy, who now came up gasping and holding her sides), "what made you come so fas'? I'd as soon wait a little longer."

"But *I* can't wait," said Jane, vainly striving to free herself from Nanny's clasp. "I'll take de law on ye, I will, a-usin' a po' woman so in de publick road as is free t' all!" She began to cry.

"Dar now, stupid, gi' me de brilers fus' an' cry arterward," said Nanny, impatiently. "I'll lose my supper ef I stan' argyin' all night."

"Ef ye do, honey," put in Dinah, quickly, "I'll cook ye de famousest supper eber ye an' yer young man set down ter."

"My!" said Nanny, simpering a little. "Mabbe I'll stay, den. Aunt Dinah c'n cook, I know.

"But no. *I'll* diskiver f'r myself," and with a jerk of the free arm she tore off the shawl, and lo! the hiding-place was revealed.

"Fi, shame, Jane!" began Dinah; but Nanny fiercely shook her, and she handed out the fowls, with many tears dropping freely on them.

"I t'ink, honey, dat ye've 'arned dat supper, anyway," laughed Dinah, as the pair slowly retraced their steps, "and ye shall hav' it, I promise ye. What *will* Mr. Sam'lls t'ink ob ole Dinah prancin' off so sudden? I 'clar', now I stop ter sense it, 'pears I acted as ef I wur crazy." She shook with merriment.

"You make me laugh, too, Aunt Dinah. It *wus* funny t' see yer pantin' an' gaspin'. Law, it didn't tire me a bit! An' I cotched her f'r once. It's hard t' do it, she's so sly. What'll yer do wid dese? Can't take 'em in ag'in."

"Oh, I don't keer what yer do! 'Twar'n't de chick'ns I keered 'bout; I wur boun' t' know whar dey went ter. Mabbe I'd oughter a let her tooken 'em t' dose chilluns; I don't s'pose dey git too much t' eat. I wish I hed!"

"Pshaw! *I* know what t' do. Gi' me them; yer go in, an' I'll slip in bam-by." Sly Nanny slid into the pantry unperceived, and carefully arranged the chickens on a dainty, gilt-edged dish she found there, put a wire screen over it, saying, "There's breakfas' ready, now, widout no trouble at all on de eater's part. Wish I c'd be allers sure ob one as good and noth'n' t' gib f'r 't."

XXVIII.

MRS. SHEPARDSON.

MARIAN was writing to friends in New England: "Love for Virginia grows stronger with years. It is a grand old State. I am beginning to understand it now —the secret of the passion she inspires in those native to her soil. It surely is her sunny temper. Her skies are blue and clear when yours, away in Berkshire, are leaden-tinted. The sun shines, brightening the wintry aspect of nature. One here forgets to long for the spring."

A tap at her door, followed by Mr. Samuels. "Ah! you are writing; I will not disturb you."

Marian smiled as she remembered that during his early sojourn in the neighborhood he manifested no such

scruple. "Truly, we receive as well as give," she murmured. "This good man *is* acquiring gradually a sense of the fitness of things—a polish formerly foreign. But doubtless the little wife has some credit for that."

"Come in," she called, cheerily. "My letter is not urgent. Come and tell me what my people have been doing to you lately."

He smiled rather grimly as he seated himself in Marian's most luxurious chair. "I wish, Miss Stone, that I could truthfully affirm with a portion, only, of your confidence, these are 'my people.'"

As she looked at him, inquiringly, he resumed: "And *why* can't I feel that they belong to me and I to them? The same African lineage, and yet we seem as totally unlike as if in different planets.

"I preach the truths I know and revere, in the plainest language I can choose, and though they appear to give respectful attention to every word, I feel (even as I speak) that the seed drops on stony ground, and there'll be no harvest.

"Consider the result of my two years' work here! What is my church? One ex-Baptist, excommunicated for some offence against the deacons, and smarting with impotent rage at 'de deadly insult t' his feelin's,' as he puts it, concludes to 'turn Presb'ter'an' to spite his enemies. And a few young people followed him, influenced by the novelty of the thing. So little to show for my labor of years!"

Marian smiled. "It is disappointing, I admit. I did not think that your object in coming here was wholly to *build up a church.* Ah! *that* will take time."

"It appears so, indeed, Miss Stone. I think that I made a mistake in the attempt. Missionary work is not

exactly what I am best fitted for. And there are *other* drawbacks. If my wife and I go away for a few days' visit, we do not find our property intact on our return. No, indeed. Our chickens disappeared mysteriously, and it is always 'de mink done cotch 'em,' or 'I seed a weasel t' other night 'roun'; mus' a-kotch 'em.'"

Marian's laugh rang out merrily at his mimicry.

"No. We alternate our visiting now. When my wife goes, I stay. They respect *your* fowls, Miss Stone. I do not think in my case that they can bring up their old plantation days' excuse for pilfering—'dat it were right for 'em t' take white folks' property, as dey was only property demselves.' The fact is, these people have no moral sense."

"It will take time to develop it, friend Samuels. How can we blame them?" answered Marian, warmly.

"Ah, Miss Stone, I think they never will have another such advocate as yourself!" cried the minister. "To the blunt array of their shortcomings and failures you are ever ready with the same, 'It will take time' to bring about their regeneration. So much of it," he smiled, ironically, "so long a time, that I fear my courage will ooze away before I see the least accomplishment."

"There is a seed time, Mr. Samuels, and there is a harvest time. It may well be that neither you nor I will live to see the latter. Great changes cannot be expected in one generation. It is enough for us that the field is open for us to work therein, and the harvest will surely follow in due time."

"It may be," the minister murmured, doubtfully. "We will take a little present comfort in hoping for better things in the future."

"Why, here comes Mrs. Barstow!" exclaimed

Marian, as the door was pushed ajar from without, and that worthy lady's face presented itself in the space, in the attitude familiar to small children as "peeking." "Come in, come in, Mrs. Barstow! I am glad to see you."

"The mortal suz! I guess I'm glad 'nough t' set my gaze on some one 'roun' my ole hum. Your face is good f'r sore eyes, I tell you—b't there! I don't mean t' say as I've got any.

"Why yis, I guess I'll set a spell an' rest me. It's mortal hard travellin' on shank's mare all the way from the court-house. Shepar'son brought me *to* there, an' as the hosses can't b' spared, you know, at this time o' year, why I up an' says t' sis, 'I'll jest foot it t' Marun's an' back by sundown, I guess.'

"How're *you* gettin' along, Mr. Sammy? Not much t' speak of, I guess; seems t' me your a-lookin' ruther down 'n the mouth. There! you mus'n't be mad at me f'r callin' ye Mr. Sammy; ye see I've got a son Samuel up North, an' I allers did call him Sammy, an allers shall, if he *is* growed t' be a gran'ther himself, as I hear latterly; an' when I start t' say your name it jess sticks 'n my throat, an' I out with 'Sammy' 'fore I knows it."

The minister appeared to regard this apology as sufficient, for he smiled benignly. "I trust that your daughter's family are quite well, Mrs. Barstow?"

"Oh, 'bout so so! Sis ain't been very rugged sence Hiram Judson was born, b't I'm there t' take holt an' bear the brunt o' the work, an' I find a-plenty to do, I guess. My sorrer! there's some men folks, Marun, you know, that wants a deal o' waitin' on an' pickin' up arter, and the Shepar'son fam'ly are one o' them sort. It's 'Stellur, where's this?' an' 'why can't I ever find

that?' till I jess took the reins in my own hand, an' I don't let up on 'em none—no, not one ioty. They have t' do the'r own waitin' on ef they're *well*, an' if they're sick or ailin' any way an' c'n't, why, I'll see t' it they don't suffer. Yis," shaking her clinched hand energetically before Mr. Samuels, "I c'n truthfully say at last that I have got the Shepar'son fam'ly jess where it b'longs."

"I am really glad to hear it," smiled the minister. "It is a matter of considerable doubt with me just where I belong in this world; I wonder if you could solve that problem?"

"I ruther guess so, if there ain't *too* much 'rethmetic 'bout it! I thought you looked ruther down 't the heel 'bout suthin'. Y' don't quite fit inter ole Virginny ways, I take it, Mr. Sammy. Well, I don't myself, an' never shall. Giv' me old York State 'fore any other I ever see! If all Virginny was paved with greenbacks a foot deep, an' I could rustle through an' pick up 's I went, I'd say the same.

"No; Malviny Ba'sto' (that was) is too sot in her way t' change inter a reg'lar down-South sort o' woman. But I've l'arned t' keep my feelin's ter myself more'n I used t'." Here Marian could not repress a smile. "And I ruther guess *your* trouble is that you don't take holt 'arnest 'nough t' change things 'roun' as you want 'em t' be. *I'm* in 'arnest in ev'rything I undertake."

Then followed a thoughtful silence.

"Mrs. Barstow," presently observed Marian, glancing toward the thin, nervous lips tremulously working, as was their unceasing custom, "one expression of yours puzzles me greatly. I understood you to say 'that was,' in a tone implying that no such person is now living.

Pray, is this your 'wraith' we see before us? It looks substantial enough."

"My sorrer! I should think it was. I've grown the heftiest I ever was in all my life this year. It seems as if the harder I put through the stouter I git. Wall, I guess ye ain't none on ye down this way heard the news, f'r I met several on the way here, an' up an' axed 'em if they *had*, and they said 'No.' I told sis 'fore I started that I s'posed I should be like a newspaper, an' carry my own tidings."

"What *are* they, then, Mrs. Barstow?" asked Marian, impatiently.

"Why, that I'm Mis' Ba'sto' no longer. I've up an' married old Shepar'son, an' done with it!"

A peal of ringing laughter from Marian. Even the hollow-eyed, sad-faced minister joined in it.

"I don't see what call y' have t' make fun o' sech a very nateral proceeding as that. I can't see, Marun, f'r the life o' me," began the elderly bride, looking nettled and uncomfortable.

But Marian hastily subdued her rebellious features before a rupture of friendship occurred. "It's all right, Mrs. Shepardson; as you say, 'very natural,' and I am willing to congratulate you. Let us shake hands on it."

"There! my paw ain't scursely fit f'r ye t' tech, f'r I made soft-soap last week, and the lye e't my fingers till they're rough as a nutmeg-grater."

"And why was I not asked to the wedding, I should like to know?" continued Marian, in a comical, aggrieved tone. "It looks like a deliberate slight."

"No, it ain't, nuther; an', Marun, you know better'n t' say so. Old folks like me an' Shepar'son ain't no time nor disposition f'r such tomfoolery as a wedd'n' party. Ye see, I thought I could manage him better if I got the

reins in my own hand, and I was boun' t' manage the whole of 'em, or quit. 'Twas uphill work 'nough the first few months, an' I threatened more'n once t' give 'em the go-by an' pack up my few duds an' start for my son Sammy's in old Onta'. Sis, she looked ruther peaked, and I really hadn't the heart t' leave her, you know, Marun; b't I meant 'em all t' *think* so. An' so it finally come 'bout that Shepar'son asked me what I thought 'bout tacklin' to an' makin' a double team in the fam'ly? An' I said I was willin' if he was, an' 'twas arranged very sensible an' quiet like, if I *do* say it; an', Marun, the beatingest thing 'bout the whole affair is that the Rev. Clayton Armstead tied the knot. You ought t' a-seen that man's countenance when we stood up before him! There was as many changes went over it as over an April day. I hadn't set eyes on the man in years—not sence he made his pastoral call, the only one he ever *did* make to *me*. But the land suz! I'm doin' all the talkin'."

"Your conversation is exceedingly piquant, but some portions of reminiscence are incomprehensible to me," observed Mr. Samuels, in a languid tone.

"My sorrer! I shouldn't wonder. An' I must ask you, 'fore I f'rgit it, ef you commonly use such big words in your sermons? If you do I don't wonder that you don't git a strong holt on these folks you come t' preach to," serenely observed Mrs. Malviny.

"And why did Stella name her boy Hiram?" inquired the teacher, in a tone of disapproval.

"'Hiram Judson,' you mean, for that's what it is. Ye must give the hull name, if you want t' keep in with Shepar'son, I tell ye. It seems his first wife was a Judson, and *her* father was Hiram, and the Englishers are mortal hands t' holt on t' anything—even if noth'n'

but a name—when they've once got it. An' noth'n' t' do but this baby must take way back inter the dark ages, as I tell sis, f'r a name like that—Hiram Judson Shepar'son. Wall, I s'pose if he ever b'comes President that name'll sound as well as any other, don't you? The Shepar'sons are the sottest in their minds of any tribe I ever did see; can't skursely beat 'em out of anything they git a grip on—real English, I tell sis.

"The mortal suz, Marun! if you'll b'lieve me, neither one on 'em had ever heard of Adoniram or Ann Hazeltine. I sort o' suggested that the little chap be called Adoniram, and the *sound* would be most the same; and land o' mortal! they didn't see no sense in the suggestion, and said the name war'n't half as ''andsome' as theirs. So I up an' held my tongue. Poor Sim used t' say it was an onruly member, but I don't know," she sighed.

"I suppose you do not 'mind the cows' nowadays, Mrs. Shepardson. Come, my dinner is ready, and a cup of tea will refresh you."

"So it will. I set a great deal on a cup o' tea, an' I used t' think I was as good a judge o' that article as you could pick out in Onta'. But Land o' Goshen! sence I've come t' the happy land, as I call it, I ain't hed no sech tea as I used t'. It's been hard pickin's most the time. Goin', Mr. Sammy? Hope you'll *do* well here, and you will ef you're in 'arnest 'nough and have strength t' hold out.

"Till he's as old as Methuselah, I ought t' have added," as the door closed after him. "Yis, Marun, I flax 'roun' same 's ever. I tell sis I do ev'rything there *is* t' do, and more, too. We're gittin' some fine stock on the place, and that brings up a run-down farm 'mazin' fast. This red clay land, too, is strong land, an' holds

what ye put inter it. I ruther guess ef we have our health and strength that we sh'll be able t' make a livin'."

"I rejoice that you are so comfortably settled," said Marian, cheerily. "This ham I cured myself; try some."

"An' it's sweet as a rose," declared Mrs. Malviny. "There, now, is where Shepar'son fails. He don't b'gin t' know nigh as much 'bout curin' hog meat as I do, if I *do* say it. He made a botch of it last picklin' time. But land! ye c'n't touch him with a ten-foot pole when ye jess b'gin t' hint anythin' of the sort."

"I hope he is not ill-tempered," said the teacher, a little fearfully.

"Noth'n' t' speak of. I ain't 'fraid o' him nor no mortal man," and the fists emphasized the assertion so vigorously that over went Marian's pretty teapot, an amber stream flowing out on the carpet, greatly to Malvina's chagrin.

"It does not matter. And we have had our second cups, you know, so the loss is not great," observed the teacher, reassuringly.

"B't it is, Marun. I never waste a drop o' tea, you remember. I've gone as high as six cups, b't that ain't my daily allowance. An' I sometimes chaw the grounds besides."

"I'll make some more. You shall have six cups if you wish," and the kettle was presently steaming. "We will have a real symposium," the teacher said, hesitating for a word, and smiling.

XXIX.

"A CUP O' TEA."

"THE mortal suz! I don't know what *that* is, b't I do know that we are havin' a very comfort'ble set down. You can make bread most as good as mine, Marun."

"Not quite so good. I think your bread as light and sweet and spongy as any I ever ate." Marian laughed slyly.

"That's what Sim allers said." A gratified flush rose to the usually pallid cheeks at the unexpected praise. "Says he, 'Malviny fails on some things, b't there's one thing you c'n't beat her on, an' that's bread;' poor Sim was dreadful fond o' good bread!" she sighed.

"There are *many* things 'Malviny' succeeds in," quietly added the teacher. "I often recall your way of frying chicken."

"But *that*," quickly interposed the guest, "I l'arned frum the colored women 'roun' me. They certain sure do beat us Yankees at that. They c'n set a rousin' table, an' do it all with only a skillet an' a bake-kettle in the hot ashes."

"But they don't have occasion to display their talents nowadays," remarked the teacher, thoughtfully.

"Land, no! the big dinners sech as the white folks used t' give are done with. Fact is, Marun, the white folks have t' grub' roun' t' git suthin' t' eat as well as the poor colored people. I mus' say I'm ruther pleased t' see 'em scratchin' roun' findin' some employment. Sim used t' stick t' it that all the people of this State needed to make it a paradise on earth was steady payin'

labor, f'r black an' white alike. That wus when we fus' moved down, an' it's come 'bout a great deal sooner than I thought it would."

Marian said nothing, but regarded her teacup meditatively.

"There's Lucy Darnell, now. How she used t' turn up her nose at even teaching! 'High an' mighty was my lady fine,' as the old song goes. She wouldn't waste her accomplishments on even white children. Ah, Marun, they've been runnin' down-hill awful latterly, all t' seed. Aunt Rose told me herself one day I seed her over to the court-house t' do some tradin' that 'dem chilluns hab got ter stir 'roun' mighty lively *soon*, or else dey wouldn't git t'gedder 'nough property ter bury 'em decent when dere time's done come.'"

"It seems foolish to worry over the manner of our burial," remarked Marian.

"I don't know 'bout *that* either. I've often thought of old Zephania Bunker, who hed his coffin made when he first set up housekeepin'. T' be sorter handy, y' know, in case of an accident. He used t' keep beans in it. An' it didn't hurt the beans none, as I see. An' when you got used t' seein' it, 'twarn't noth'n'. But the fus' time I seed it hauled out an' the beans (most used up they was then) rattlin' roun' in it, it give me a start. 'The mortal suz!' I yelled out, 'what's that?' 'Why, cranberries, these be,' says he; 'I hain't got no kidneys now.' He thought I was axin' 'bout the *kind* o' his garden truck, ye see."

Marian gave a gleeful chuckle. Mrs. Shepardson paused a moment to survey her.

"There! now you look jest as y' did a dozen or so years ago, when you laugh like that. You've changed *some*. Staider than you used t' be when you boarded

with me. B't you hold y'r own well, Marun. You hold y'r own toler'ble well, I tell ye.

"Cur'us! Did I tell ye that Lucy Darnell had fin'lly come *to* it, an' was teaching school over in Goochland? An' Rose said she hed over forty scholars, an' I ruther guess has t' flax 'roun' toler'ble spry. It'll be the makin' of her! If that can be said 'bout anybody that wus finished off an' turned thirty 'fore the new era b'gun. I guess she don't find time t' apply poultices—"

"Except to the young ideas," laughed Marian. "We teachers are expected to do that, you know."

"An' Percy has gone t' work on the farm, they tell me, jess as handy as c'n be. I never s'posed he'd come t' that. B't I say it ag'in, it'll be the makin' of him. I used t' hear it hinted 'mong the colored folks, Marun, that he would like amazin'ly t' git better acquainted with you. It's cur'us how sech things do fly abroad!"

"There *are* lively imaginations—" began Marian.

"There now! You needn't go t' smooth over things. Ye can't alter noth'n'; an' I don't mean t' meddle. Nobody c'n ever say *that* of Malviny Ba'sto' (that *wus*), that she hed a meddlesome mind. B't land! ye needn't be 'n the least 'fraid t' c'nfide in me; it won't go no further. My sorrer! I should a-*liked* t' c'nfide in some one when Shepar'son fus' axed me 'bout tacklin' to, f'r I war'n't quite sot in my own mind f'r quite a spell whether I really wanted t' change my name or not. Change my name an' not my natur', you know the old saying is, Marun."

"You might have asked *my* opinion, I think," said Marian, reproachfully. "It wouldn't 'have gone any farther,' I am sure."

Mrs. Malviny laughed. "Sim used t' say that a secret once told might as well be spread all over the town

at once. I think Sim gin'rally hit the nail on the head square. Not b't that I'm certain sure in my own mind that women c'n keep things t' themselves, if need be, as well or better'n men. They're a much-abused class o' critturs gin'rally, are women. I've allers stuck t' 't, it's 'cause they're so meek an' patient. It stan's t' reason them that's patient an' willin' will be sure t' git all the rubs. Mabbe it'll b' made up t' 'em hereafter; I wonder if 't will?

"There now! I'll have one more cup o' young hyson (it does put the sperit inter me as noth'n' else does), an' another pinch o' sugar cake, an' then I mus' b' gittin' hum 'fore night sets in. It's quite a stretch over there. I've hed a likely time as ever I hed. I s'pose this might b' called my bridal tower, f'r it's the only one I've hed or am likely t' hav' 's fur 's I c'n see; the fac' is, it's the fus' time I've been out o' sight o' the chimney sence I bid adoo t' Malviny Ba'sto' f'rever.

"I c'n allers tell by pinchin' it, Marun, if cake is good; can't you? There's a certain spongy feel t' it if it's all right one can't mistake. The mortal suz! we've been s' short o' eggs over t' our house, latterly, that I've got inter the way o' makin' stirred cake without. The shifts I've been put to t' make good things out o' noth'n' would make you open your eyes, I tell you! What d'ye think o' beatin' up slippery elem tea till it's light an' frothy, an' usin' that f'r eggs? I've done it many a time. There ain't noth'n' skursely that grows b't is good f'r suthin', if ye c'n set your wits t' work t' find it out; an' you'll find that t' be true, Marun, if you live 's long as I have.

"How I *do* run on! Must be the tea set me a-goin', f'r I ain't very talkative nat'rally, you remember?"

Marian looked up bewildered, as if her thoughts had

been elsewhere than with her guest—which was indeed the truth.

Mrs. Malviny noticed it, and while her tongue wandered over various unimportant themes her shrewd mind was speculating, while her eyes were fixed dimly on Marian's face.

"There, now! you're thinking 'bout what I told you a spell back about those Southern folks, the Darnells. I c'n see it in yer face. Sim allers used t' say I was a good guesser; and I told him the reason was I was born in guess-land. They don't guess none down here—allers a-reck'nin' they be! B't still I've managed t' keep my talent pretty bright."

Marian tried to smile—"I must have an expressive countenance, Mrs. Barstow—"

Malviny held up her hand. "There, now, don't 'pologize! One name suits me as well as t' other, an' I don't mean t' carry the idee that my second is any improvement on my first.

"Yis, Marun, you *hev'* got a ruther tellin' face. Land suz! I've seen faces s' sly an' close the one who owned 'em might a' been planning a murder an' not a hint of it would the face let on. But that ain't your sort. It's as open as the day."

"Really, I shall wear a veil in future," laughed the teacher. "I am fond of reserve."

"Now, if you mean that as a hint f'r me," interrupted Mrs. Malviny, with the utmost good-humor, "I'm free t' tell ye that I don't care a grain f'r yer hints. An' I've got a big piece o' news t' tell you that I heerd as I come on over here. I've been a-keepin' *it* f'r the last, f'r I didn't mean it should spile my visit, I tell ye, when I've been a-lottin' on seein' you all this mortal winter past. It's been a tough job t' hold

in, I tell you, f'r I like t' out with it two or three times."

Marian rose to her feet in astonishment and stared at her guest. "What news have you that will affect *me*, I beg to know?" She brought forth the words slowly.

"I don't know as any. You're c'nsid'able hard t' be affected, Marun. B't it affected *me* turrible. I've a very feelin' heart, y' know, Marun. An' t' hev' sech awful doin's right among us, as it ware, an' nobody t' help or hender, jest 'bout c'mpletely upsot me. That's all."

"*What* is 'all'? You see you haven't told me anything yet," said Marian, weary of gossiping visitors, and thinking longingly of her delayed correspondence.

"Why, jest that I heerd 'em talking at the courthouse as I come through that Percy Darnell an' that pesky nigger, Yaller Joe, had fit, an' fit, as desp'rate as dogs, an' that finally, when folks come on the scene the nigger had run away, an' the white man lay dead, they thought at fust; b't they managed t' pick him up, an' finally they brought him to; b't they do say he can't live—he 's in a turrible plight; an' I hope now they'll pass a law that any man, whether black or white, who carries weapons of any sort shall go t' States prison f'r twenty years. *I'd* soon break up this business, I tell you. If folks git blazin' mad an' hain't got no arms, why they'll be apt t' fisticuff a spell, and the one that got licked 'd hev' t' grin an' bear it. B't when pistils happ'n t' be in their pockets, they're so mighty handy they're sure t' pop out."

"I thought their old enmity had all died out," said Marian.

"Land, no! Ev'ry now an' then they're up an' at it like cats an' dogs. They hate each other like p'ison, it

seems. Mus' be 'twas born into 'em an' they can't help it. I dunno when I've heerd anything so awful as this. They say old Rose is broke up 'ntirely, she feels s' bad; b't she ain't away from Percy's bed skurse a minit. If good nursin'll save him she'll pull him through, f'r she sets b' him same 's if he was her own flesh an' blood."

"Oh, yes, he will live, I think," said Marian, in a dreamy, absent tone.

"*I* don't know 'bout that, Marun." Mrs. Malviny spoke in a curt, half-offended tone. "Nor *you* hain't no right t' up an' think how it'll turn, either. It'll be 'bout that as the Lord wills. Some He saves arter they come so close t' death's door that they c'n a'most peek in; an' some He takes away. We ain't none on us plumb sure o' nuth'n' in this world, Marun; that is the livin' truth."

"I do not set my opinion up as worth anything," wearily answered the teacher.

"I should ruther think not. Not wuth a cent. An' now I hev' emptied my news-bag clean, an' I mus' peg right along sharp f'r old Shepar'son's. Good-day t' you, Marun, till you come t' se me an' Sis, or I come t' return my own visit. It rests with you *which* way 'tis!"

XXX.

MARIAN'S SECOND VISIT TO "STETTEN WOOD."

"Ooay! Miss Maryon! Ooay!"

Marian threw up her window and leaned out. The sun was rising above the tall oaks to eastward; birds

twittered, hopping on the ground below; a soft southern breeze swept faintly her cheek: a negress, tall and of stately presence, with a plaid kerchief wound around her head, stood looking up impatiently.

"Howdy, Miss Maryon! howdy! dis am a fine spring mornin', suah."

"Why, it is Mammy Rose!" cried Marian, in surprise. "Wait an instant. I'll be down and let you in."

"So it be, honey! sorry t' rouse yer so, chile, frum yer beauty nap," with a courteous obeisance. "An' how pow'ful soun' yer *does* sleep, Miss Maryon, honey! I was 'feard I'd have t' step over t' Judah's ag'in an' wait still longer."

"Have you called me once before this morning?" inquired Marian.

"Twice befo', honey. No, I can't stop long 'nough ter go inter de house," seating herself on the doorstep. "I'se 'mazin' impatient t' git back *soon*. I started t' sen' one o' de chilluns ober 'stid o' comin' myself; den I say, 'Miss Maryon ain't gwine t' pay no heed t' what dem chilluns say—s'pose it some dere fool-talk mos' likely, an' she'll lissen t' ole Rose, suah 'nough; she done know dat what ole mammy tells her be gospil trufe.'"

"I heard last evening about your trouble," said the teacher, quickly. "I was going to send one of Uncle Judah's girls over to ask if you did not need something. I have rolls of soft old linen for bandages and lint, among other stores sent to me from the North; you can have anything you wish. I will insist upon your coming to me for whatever will be useful to you."

"O Miss Maryon, honey, dat I will gladly. Don't I know dat yer doo' am allers open an' yer han' allers ready ter scatter 'broad good gif's? Ole Rose hain't

lived 'longside o' yer all dese years ter go an' be 'fraid o' ye when de day ob trial comes. B't dem t'ings I'll ask f'r bam-by, suah 'nough. 'Tain't no sech stores I've been hangin' roun' t' git courage t' tote away from yere. O Miss Maryon, it's sore trouble hes come 'pon me," lifting streaming eyes to the doorway, where the gentle teacher stood with a sorrowful face regarding her.

"De las' few years hab been might' burd'nsome t' ole Rose," she went on, wiping her eyes. "I done tole nobody befo', 'case 'twa'n't seemly ter stir up all de settlin's; maybe, I kep' tellin' myself, dat de water boun' ter cl'ar itself at las' ef nobody interfere ter muddy it. B't it growed a heap worse. An' de poverty ob de house growed worse too. O Miss Maryon, 'twere a bitter pill t' swaller down ter see my chilluns dat I hab raised go ter hard work in de fiel'! Mas'r Percy labor till de sweat roll down his face like he wur cryin'! It wur sore f'r me t' see it. An' I promised his ma on her dyin' bed as I would allers stan' by her chillun."

"You have kept your promise," said Marian, softly. "And labor won't hurt Percy any more than Joe. You know that I believe in labor for every one."

"I know. An' I t'inks myself dat Miss Lucy is a heap nicer t' lib wid now she hab somet'in' t' do. Teachin' ain't hard work, like ploughin' an' hoein'. 'Twa'n't Miss Lucy I wus frettin' fur; *she* kin stan' a heap ob hard work an' not crash down nor noth'n'."

Marian knew that Percy had always been Aunt Rose's favorite; she understood how her loving care had brooded over his fortunes from infancy, warding off real or imaginary dangers. Gladly would she have toiled for him in the house and in the field to have shielded him from the degradation (in her eyes) of his hard toil. But

Percy had awakened, at last, to a sense of his individuality—to the necessity of earning his daily bread, if he had any.

"If I cannot hold office," he said, "and earn my living, I can at least till the land and earn it, and I *will!*" And he sent mammy back to the house as he said it, wresting the hoe from her shrivelled hands. "You're too old to work in the field, mammy."

"I 'clar', I'se proud o' my chile when he said dat. I knowed dat he wur allers kind ter me, an' never so orderin' as de res' ob de fam'ly. De only fault he had, Miss Maryon, were his easy way, t' jest not trouble 'bout the way de ole place were goin'. Dar's mor'gages yere an' mor'gages dere, Miss Maryon, on eb'ryt'ing. I 'spec's dey neber 'll cl'ar off either, *now*." The faithful creature broke down in sobs, and covered her head with her apron, that she might indulge her grief decently.

"Don't, Mammy Rose, pray don't!" cried Marian. "When Percy gets well all will come right again. And poverty isn't the worst thing to bear."

"That it isn't. I'm not frettin' f'r *that*." She raised her head wearily. "It's de strife an' de hatred an' de constant fear ob de end ob it all dat hab worn my sperit sore," sighed Rose. "An' now 'de end' hab come; de b'ginnin' ob de end," she wailed. "Oh, yis, I knows what de doctors keep a-sayin' t' sorter keep up Mas'r Percy's courage; b't ole Rose hab seen 'em shakin' dar hades when dey t'ink no one wus look'n'. An' dey keeps a-bringin' more t' look at 'im, till six ob 'em hab been ter Stetten a'ready. I hab sense 'nough, I hope, honey, to put all dis t'gedder, an' dat say de end hab come.

"We sent f'r Miss Lucy ter come home yistiddy. I dunno b't I'm sorry we did, f'r she kin do noth'n' b't

cry when she comes inter whar her brudder lies, an' it worries him t' see it. 'Send her out, mammy, send her out,' he whispered. B't ob coorse I can't do dat. 'I only want you, mammy,' he say, 'an' *one other*.'

"'De po' lam' am out ob his hade,' I whisper t' his sist'r; 'bes' leab him t' me t' nurse, an' *you* see ter de housekeepin'.'

"'Don't let her in, mammy. I only want you with me, and *one other*.' So he goes on all de night. Jest afore mornin' broke I says ter him, 'Mas'r Percy, dear, tell mammy what ter do, an' she'll do it, suah.'

"'I want *her* ter come jest once, mammy. I mean the teacher. Do yer t'ink she *will?* An' keep Lucy out, please.'

"'I will send and see ef she will,' I say, an' he sighed, 'She won't come, I know! I don't t'ink she will come.'

"'*I'll* bring her,' I said ter him, jest as Miss Lucy walked in. She'd heerd me, I knowed. B't 'fore I could say a word he rouse up like an' call 'Lucy, come yere!' An' she wus cryin', as usual.

"'Bottle up yer tears, sist'r, an' wait till I need 'em,' he say in his ole way quite. An' den he went on t' open his heart t' his sist'r. Bress de chile! he'd tole his ole mammy 'bout it years afore. Yis, honey, he allers did come ter Rose f'r comfort. An' I done hope he allers got de bes' she had ter offer.

"Miss Maryon, honey, yer don't b'gin ter know how he's sot b' ye all dese long years. An' I knowed all de time de reason f'r his tryin' 'long back t' work so wus de hope o' gainin' ye 'roun' finally. An' now he poured out all his love t' his sist'r, an' I 'wur 'most 'fraid t' look at her f'r fear how she'd take it. A 'mazin' proud an' jealous fam'ly the Darnells be, an', ye see, he neber

'peared t' set by Miss Lucy 's much 's she did by him, an' I were mos' certain dere would be a scene. Bress you, Miss Maryon, noth'n' ob de sort! I wur dat proud o' Miss Lucy at de way she done behave, dat I clasped my ole arms 'roun' her an' cried out: '*Now* you're de daughter ob your ma, suah! Dat's jest as she would say herself ef she were livin'.' An' den we all sobbed t'gedder, I c'nfess."

Marian dropped to a seat beside her. "Aunty, what did Lucy say?"

"Why, dat she'd be happy an' proud t' greet yer as a guest at Stetten Woods. She had admired you gre'tly f'r years. An' I knowed she wur speakin' de trufe; dar wus dat cl'ar, honest look in de eye same 's all de Darnells hab when dey tells de trufe. An' now will yer go wid me, Miss Maryon? Say yer won't sen' ole Rose back alone?"

Marian flushed a little, but she rose to her feet with prompt decision. "Just come in until I have a cup of coffee, and I will go with you. And you feared to ask me to make a friendly visit? I am ashamed of you, Aunt Rose. But we are not to go empty-handed to your patient. While I get 'a snack,' as you call it here, you are to select from that closet and pack in that basket whatever you choose. There are jellies and wine and cordials of various sorts, surgical appliances, bed linen, and clothing. I will leave you, and make all the haste possible."

"Do, honey, f'r I long t' be back ag'in. Mas'r Percy is patienter wid me dan wid his sist'r—a heap gentler."

Mammy Rose noticed, as they went down the steps and she poised her basket on her head, that the teacher reached for a spray of honeysuckle, just budding, and arranged the glossy leaves carefully, almost tenderly, as

she walked along the little path. "I wonder," she mused silently, "if she knows dat flower am Percy's fav'rite ob all dat blossoms on de yarth? 'Spec's I bes' not tell her. Dar's danger ob sayin' *too* much, I has sense ter know. De signs am a-workin' right at present, I 'serves."

"And where is Joe?" questioned Marian, suddenly breaking in upon the aged negress's day-dreaming.

"I dunno whar, Miss Maryon. Outen de State, I done certain. Joe ain't no fool ter bide roun' whar he'll b' cotched at short notice. I neber see him no mo' arter dis las' quar'l wid Mas'r Percy! No; I dunno whar he be, an' I don' care no gre't eider. De trouble wid Joe allers wus dat he neber would lissen t' his mammy's advice, neber! I'se done glad ef he's cl'ar'd outen dis yer neighborhood f'r good."

"There is a great deal of allowance to be made for Joe," observed Marian, quietly. "He is a man of marked ability. He cannot look upon the family at Stetten Woods as really his superior in any respect save that of race. I believe he does feel that to be a white man would be a greater privilege than to be as he is. He has often expressed himself to me on this particular point. 'So nearly white, Miss Marian,' he once said, with a bitterness of tone I shall never forget, 'I would be willing to be skinned, provided all trace of the detestable color could be eradicated. In intellect, and morals, and culture, and affinities of all kinds I belong to the white race, yet they turn a cold shoulder on me because a few drops of color run in my veins. O God! why was I not born a white man?' I can never forget that cry. It thrilled through me then with such a keen pain that I could not answer it with any words but those of the merest commonplace."

Mammy Rose put her burden down and straightened her majestic figure with indignation. "He's wuss'n de po' white trash! *him* talk 'bout havin' quality feelin's! he don't *b'gin* t' know 'bout one on 'm! Eb'ry livin' creetur ob any 'count at all will certain suah stan' by de modder dat raised 'em frum a suckin' baby ter manhood. He mighty will'n' f'r ter cas' his ole mammy off 'n wish he hedn't a drap o' her blood 'n his body!"

She picked up her basket and strode on in dignified silence. Suddenly she broke out in a fierce, sibilant whisper: "Does he t'ink it'll make a white man ob him ef he kills his brudder?"

Marian looked up, startled.

"Yis, chile, dey hed de same fadder, as God is my jedge. What is dat yer Bible passage de preachers use f'r text? 'De sins ob de fadders shall be visited upon de chillun unto de third gen'ration,'" she muttered. "An' it's so."

How well Marian remembered the stately avenues, the spacious lawn, the massive-looking house, with its broad verandas and trellised porches! Signs of decay were everywhere apparent, only the feeblest attempts having been made to ward off time and the weather's inevitable ravages. Birds were nesting in the grand old trees, and two hounds sneaked into the sunlight from some covert, barking furiously.

As Marian advanced up the broad walk, now weed-grown and irregular of outline, the dogs still leaping and fawning upon Rose who loitered behind, suddenly the door opening upon the porch flew open, and a quiet figure came out, standing as if waiting to welcome the stranger.

"I am Lucy," she said, with filling eyes, as she held out both little hands. "And you are Marian. And

you will let me learn to love you? I don't ask you to try to return my love, for I am of such an ugly disposition that you cannot."

"We will see." And Marian drew her gently near and kissed her.

"T' t'ink dese ole eyes hab libed t' see dat!" murmured the negress, proudly.

"We have both been longing for your coming for hours, and Percy was so restless that I came to watch the road from a side window. I caught the first glimpse of you afar off, and ran to tell him. Go to him, mammy, and fix him up a bit while I attend to Miss Marian."

Mammy disappeared in silence.

"There are many things I want to ask your pardon for," began Lucy, in a hesitating tone. "Yes, you must let me speak of these things while the mood is upon me. I am a perverse creature, and cannot rely on my present good impulse. You do not know how, in the past years, I have tried to injure you. I am ashamed of it now, I am quite sure—"

"Pray, do not allude to the past," said Marian. "Let us speak of the present."

"It was one of your own countrymen," persisted Lucy, "who changed my upstart pride to a more tolerable basis. I do not know his name, but from the bottom of my heart I thank him. I was in Richmond, walking along the street. Two gentlemen, whom I knew to be Yankees, were standing in a doorway talking. They seemed to be in a merry mood. As I passed, one of them exclaimed: 'Gentle, is he? good reason for it, too; poverty would make a hog gentle!' The expression haunted me, I confess, for weeks. I came to the conclusion, finally, that I was poor enough to be gentle; but the new rôle didn't work well at first, Marian. My friends were sure I was falling ill because I was so subdued in manner, and this belief led to embarrassing complications, I assure you. I do not know that any of them even yet believe in the genuineness of my repentance. Mine is a life wasted, my sister, a life wasted!"

Marian started at the word "sister." "Southern

like, she seems to be assuming all things from one slight premise," she mused, silently. Then she smiled at the little woman's earnestness, and regarded the mobile features attentively.

"She looks amiable, but not sincere; she is voluble, but not flattering; proud, but not conceited; jealous, but not suspicious. I think I shall like her *measurably*." Having thus weighed this new acquaintance in her mental balances, Yankee-like, Marian led the talk to other themes, until mammy reappeared to guide her to the sick-chamber.

XXXI.

THE SICK-CHAMBER.

"Mas'r Percy was tooken wid a feelin' dat he like t' be in his ma's chamber," explained Aunt Rose, as they threaded the narrow corridors, "so we moved him in dar. Nobody ain't slep' dar afore sence she died, an' it give me a mighty cur'us, tremblin' sort o' startin' at ev'ry noise at fust. De furniture am mighty ancient, an' eb'ry t'ing 's jest as she lef' it."

It was a long, low room into which Marian was ushered, with two tiny diamond-paned windows in one end fronting the east. Large-flowered chintz curtains were looped back with simple bands of the same material. There was a "chest of drawers," with heavy bronzed rings and curving, carved legs, and which possessed a romanic history.

A straight-backed sofa, covered with similar chintz, as were the low, stuffed chairs, with carved oaken backs; a quaint oval, ebony-framed mirror hanging from the ceiling; a huge bed made up high with feathers, and draped with curtains of chintz, which were looped away from the sides; a faded domestic carpet of pleasing tints, and a wondrous wall-paper of gayly-plumaged birds dis-

porting on evergreen boughs of an unnatural greenness, were the objects upon which Marian gazed as she slowly went to the bed of the sufferer.

He lay watching her slow approach. The graceful figure seemed a trifle drooping, he thought, but that may have been caused by a feeling of unwonted shyness at the strangeness of this visit. She clasped his hand, outstretched with a painful eagerness, in both hers, and stood there looking sadly at the pallid face upturned with a pitiful pleading expression.

"Oh, my love, my love, I thank you so for coming!" he said, in a low voice. "It was much to ask of you. *Too* much, perhaps; but my longing was so great, and my time so short!"

"You must not talk so, Percy," and his eyes kindled, flame-like, as her sweet tones called his name. "You must only think, now, about your getting well. And I was glad to come to see you, if I can only help you," she added, plaintively.

"You can, you *can!* The sound of your voice, the glimpse of your dear eyes, the touch of your hand—why, I can almost feel a new life surging within me. I have wondered, in the still midnights, how it would seem to be in heaven with my mother. It seemed as if that would be the utmost bliss my soul could ask. It is curious, but I have exactly the same sensation now. I want nothing more. Whether heaven or earth, it is all one and the same to me."

Marian's eyes filled as she softly stroked the nerveless fingers. "You are talking too much, Percy. Mammy charged me not to let you talk."

"How can I help it, dear, when I am inspired to speech?" he smiled. "Besides, that dreadful pain in my side seems to have left me. Oh, the weariness of the days that are past, Marian! Oh, the stubbornness of my mean pride! I could abase myself in the dust as I think of it. How can you stand there looking so divinely compassionate over *this* result of my supreme foolishness?

"Ah, yes, I see it all now—the long train of evils

which led to this! A bully? No, *that* never! But a 'fire-eater' always. It is a family inheritance. And it has led me to this—my death-wound."

"Hush, you have no right to say that!" gently interposed Marian.

"No right? I have the right pertaining to mortal peril to declare itself. And I know, in spite of what my surgeons say in my hearing, their real opinion of my case. Day and night a few words go ringing in my ears: 'Thou shalt die and not live,' until I press the pillow close, close, to shut them out. Oh, it is hideous!"

"I will stay with you and help to shut them out, Percy. You shall live and not die!" cried Marian, timidly.

"Bless you, my own darling! Oh, if it could be!" he cried, eagerly. "If it *can* only be!"

His eyes rested on the spray of honeysuckle pinned to her gown. A dreamy look passed over them. "It is all very sweet," he murmured; "very soothing and very sweet." And so saying, he fell asleep.

"Yis, honey, he be dead tired, po' lam'. B't I reck'n dis yer'll rest him pow'ful. He ain't slep' so sence it happen'd. An' de doctors hab jest rid by de winder, too, a-comin' ter dress his hurt. Ef yer'll slip inter Miss Lucy's room, Miss Maryon, I'll b' sure t' let y' know when dey goes 'way 'g'in."

"I wish you could stay with us, Marian. You comfort me mightily in my trouble," said Lucy as the afternoon waned.

"I was only waiting to be *asked*," smiled the guest, archly. "I intend to let mammy have a good night's rest, while I watch instead. Doubtless you are not aware that I am considered a good nurse, and my talents in that line must be known to be appreciated," she finished, cheerily.

"I can well believe it." A ghost of a smile flickered over Lucy's wan face an instant. "I am worse than useless in a sick-room, mammy says, and I seem always to make Percy very restless. Mammy says it's because *I* am so. Do you think so?"

"I think you will be better off in bed for this one night. I must be off early in the morning to my school, and then you will be quite fresh and strong to take my place."

"I wish you could give up your school for a while," pleaded Lucy. "I have closed mine. I must make up the time after the term closes, I suppose."

"I will see if I cannot get Uncle Judah to bring me over to-morrow evening," said Marian, thoughtfully. "I can walk back quite well in the mornings."

"But there is no need," protested the little hostess, earnestly. "There is old Jupe can drive over early enough for your school and go for you after the evening session. It is but a farm team, but I think you will not mind that now. It is all we have," added Lucy, humbly.

"My orders is ter see dat yer hab yer supper," said Rose, gliding through the doorway.

"As if I had not attended to that hours ago!" exclaimed Lucy, indignantly.

"Ob coorse, honey, *I* knowed yer hed, well 'nough," Rose added, in a mollifying tone. "B't my po' boy don't take no 'count o' time now, yer mus' rec'lec', an' I wus only givin' my orders. An' it's plain he's tooken wid a strong 'sire t' swap off nurses awhile." Rose was happy over the implied snubbing of her attendance, as her smiles betrayed.

"You are to give me directions," interposed Marian, promptly rising, "and betake yourself to sleep afterward. There's a sofa you might have, no doubt. I should wish you near enough to call you if I needed you."

"So dar be, Miss Maryon. An' I reck'n a trifle slumber won't hurt me none. B't yit I kin put up t' do widout it, ef my boy needs ole Rose. He bery weak t'-night, I kin see, an' dem doctors giv' him a heap pain t' b'ar. I dunno as dey seem f'r t' be any 'count; leas'-ways, de change dey make in Mas'r Percy's c'ndition ain't bery rapid. I knowed de sight ob you, honey, wus more heart'nin' dan tons ob dere ugly smellin' stuff."

"This is my mother's room," he whispered, yielding up his hand to Marian's warm clasp. "How do you like it?"

"It is charming," she answered, looking around. "It is so quaint and old-fashioned and home-like. I like every detail."

He looked the pleasure he felt. "So it seems to me. It is the one room in this rambling old house that I never tire of, never desire to see changed.

"And, Marian, you would have loved my mother too. Every one did. We are none of us like her," he sighed. "It would all have been so different with us if she had stayed with us.

"That is her arm-chair over in that corner; no one ever sits in it now. Would it be distasteful, my darling, to *you* to occupy it? I have a fancy to see you in it."

Marian pressed the hand she held, and in silence wheeled the luxurious seat to the bedside.

"I am going to be a stern nurse. I assure you, Master Percy, you will not find me of so yielding and coaxable a nature as Mammy Rose. Medicine you shall swallow at the appointed hours, and the rest of the time you shall sleep."

He smiled at her assumption of firmness, then he made a wry face. "I never *could* take drugs patiently. There's Lucy, now, at the word of command will open her little mouth and not a muscle twitch as down go the nauseous mixtures, like so much sugar candy. Oh, if you want a model of patience in sickness, Lucy, I am sure, would please you!"

"But I *don't* want a model of patience," saucily smiled Marian. "I prefer, school-ma'am-like, to subdue intractable patients. I fear (to tell the truth) that I am a good deal like Uncle Judah, who constantly declares that he'd 'ruther whip dan not. De gum-switch mak' 'em step 'roun' 'mazin' swift, dat it do!' And all the years of my knowledge of him I have noticed that his threats alone suffice to preserve order in his numerous family."

"And you expect to reap similar result from yours? Well, that is cool—Southern coolness!" He laughed, but the effort appeared to hurt him, and a sigh followed.

"*Yankee* coolness, if you please," corrected Miss Marian, as she unrolled some knitting work. "I begged this of Lucy, to occupy my hands; I am so accustomed to work of various kinds that I miss it."

"I believe you think it a sin to sit still!" he exclaimed a little petulantly. "Let *me* occupy your hands." His gaze was a little reproachful, she thought, and she threw aside the half-finished stocking.

The instant he perceived that, he was uneasy and troubled of aspect. "Take it up, please," he whispered. "I shall like to see you knit. My mother used to knit. Yes, the flashing of the needles amuses me, or it used to when I was a lad.

"A 'stern nurse' indeed! And you give in to my tyranny like that! Now, Marian, let me tell you; you are not to consider my irritation, my boyish impatience as anything but a part of my extreme bodily weakness, which you must overlook, or else subdue, as pleases you. You are altogether lovely and charming in my eyes. Whether you work or rest, smile or weep, talk or keep silence, you are Marian, always Marian!"

"Your heart is set on an abstraction, Percy," she said, mildly. "You are an artist, and the vision you see you clothe in gorgeous colors out of your opulent imagination. The real Marian is but a shade beside her of your own creation."

"And what then?" he queried, resentfully.

"Only this: I hate to have you waste the substance of your love on a shadow."

"And you care so much for me as this?" he cried, with beaming eyes. "And if I am wholly satisfied with 'the shadow,' as you persist in styling my lovely girl? A 'shadow' indeed! she is a glorious creature, a noble woman, whom to be permitted to walk with through life's ways would be a blessing too great to hope to attain unto."

She smiled sadly. "Our lives are so little, dear

Percy. It seems to me we should think only of doing, doing, and not of enjoying."

"And my love is so great, Marian. And I do not want to wait until the hereafter to claim you as mine.

"Ah! I remember that another is *there*." A spasm of pain contracted his lips, pressed firmly together. Marian's needles flashed rapidly up and down in the dim lamplight. Why had he torn open the healed wound by a chance allusion? Why could not the calm sweetness of a sisterly friendship content him for the rest of this mortal life, journeying to the hidden shores, whence all these sundered lives converge at last?

"When mortals put on immortality," she murmured, inaudibly. Was he then jealous of her one immortal waiting there? Ah! *that one*. It seemed but as yesterday that he stood beside her in the full health and strength of his young manhood, his sunny hair flung back from his eager face by the freshening mountain breeze; his blue eyes full of a tremulous light she was destined never to meet again; his usual reticent speech giving way to a torrent of passionate words, every one of which was burnt in indelibly upon her memory! It was cruel! Oh, it was cruel!

Like the dying echoes of a dream, as we wake afresh to the stir of morning life, she faintly heard Percy's speech go sounding on. "And when and where comes *my* reward for patient waiting, working for, hoping, if my one crown cannot be given into my keeping?"

She came out of her revery with a sigh. "Who can tell?"

XXXII.

"SOME HAPPY TIDINGS."

THE days wore painfully and slowly away. The spring advanced joyously on every side; buds expanded into blossoms on trees and shrubs, and sprang up

smilingly beside forest walks. The cheerful clatter of the farm hands going to or returning from their daily toil began and ended the quiet days at Stetten Woods. Percy lay, with increasing feebleness, in his mother's room—lay and listened to the outside noises—listened, with strained ears, for the daily arrival of Marian. He grew to distinguish the soft footfall on the stairs below, mounting—wearily enough sometimes—slowly; then a light tap as she pushed the door and entered. Sometimes Lucy entered with her; often mammy sent her up alone. But always the haggard, listless face of Percy brightened as if it were an angel visitor.

"What a burden I am to my friends!" he exclaimed one day. "I seem to get neither better nor worse. I am exasperated with those doctors shaking their heads when turned from my gaze, and smiling serenely as they feel my wrist professionally. It is a great thing to be a doctor, Marian."

"Is it?" returned Marian, soberly. Her blue orbs surveyed him critically. Day by day she had detected an alteration for the worse. The pallid countenance looked pinched with pain; deep wrinkles seamed it; the glossy hair was matted and lustreless.

She sank, nervelessly, into her usual seat. "Dear Percy, we all wish to help you live," she said, slowly.

"I have never really thought I should get well," he replied, calmly. "I was restless over it at first, but I am not now. I think each day brings me somewhat more of peace."

She sat silently thinking.

"It is you, my love, who in some mysterious manner have brought around this state of feeling," he resumed. "Perhaps it is merely your presence here. Whatever it may be, the result is the serene temper which has blessed me lately.

"And I have wanted to say to you—I will say it now, lest no other opportunity should come to me—*afterward* you are never to cherish any bitter thought toward Joe, for it was all my fault—all and wholly mine. I provoked him beyond what any mortal man

would bear. I am glad to set this right before it is too late, Marian. As for mammy, she will hear none of it. Do not heed her version ; she always has sided with me, from childhood up. Dear old mammy ! The faithfulest of living creatures. And I sha'n't be parted from her long. Mammy is very old, and she won't stay long behind."

"Don't, pray don't !" entreated Marian.

"And I have lost some other foolishness," the sick man resumed, feebly. "I am no more *jealous*, Marian. Oh yes, you will know my meaning ! What a storm-tossed soul I have had along back ! But the waves are bearing me gently along now, my love, and the shores will be soon in sight.

"I think," he whispered, as if in a delirium, "I am almost sure that *he* won't refuse his hand. Do you think he will ? The bitterness of warfare ceases at the last, my Marian, and the other army there wears both the blue and the gray."

He muttered incoherently for some time, and dropped off into a fitful slumber.

Marian's heart seemed saddened beyond speech. Silently, not to awaken him, she paced up and down the room, her hands crossed meekly before her. Ever and anon she stole to the bedside and listened to the labored breathing. At last, as if unable to bear the sound, she opened the door into the adjoining chamber, and stole inside. There mammy found her soon after, rocking her body to and fro, her whole being a tempest of grief.

"Oh," she sobbed brokenly, "tell me why I feel so, mammy ? My heart is broken."

"'Cause, honey, dear, you love my boy. Dat's why yer feels so. Ole Rose hab sharp eyes, Miss Maryon, an' it jest stan's ter reason dat yer couldn't hol' out 'g'inst one dat sots him bery soul b' ye. I t'inks yer've been a long time in findin' out dat yer keers a trifle f'r him," said Rose, with sad reproachfulness.

She sobbed violently, "Oh, it brings back so keenly the old pain ! It is like a burial of my soldier-lad, whose grave I never could find ! I can't bear it, mammy, I can't bear this second loss !"

Mammy Rose knelt before her, and the hot tears dripped from her aged face on Marian's clasped fingers: "Ah! chile, yer'll hab ter b'ar jest what ole Mas'r up above t'inks bes' f'r ye!

"Oh, Miss Maryon, dear, de trufe be dat yer loved 'em *both!* Dat's why de same ole pain creeps an' creeps up ober ye, smodderin' out all de sunshine."

Marian checked her sobs, and grasped Rose's toil-worn hands. "I hear him stirring, and you must go in at once. But tell me first, do you think if I whispered all that he longs so to hear—do you think, mammy, I could help him to live?"

"I dunno, chile," said Rose, sadly. "Him 'pear t' me ter be bery nigh Jurdan. B't yer might try, Miss Maryon. Dis yer ole heart 'd be mighty gladsome ter hab yer try."

"Percy is inquiring for you," said Lucy, entering and closing the door softly behind her. "He is, I am sure, very exacting; but you found out long ago, Marian, that he cannot bear you out of his sight.

"But what does this mean?" she cried, aghast. "You have been crying; surely you don't think—"

"I think," interrupted Marian, "that I have not known my own heart till now. And the sudden knowledge proved something of a shock to me."

"Ah!" Lucy stood gravely regarding her. "Was this what mammy meant when she whispered to Percy, 'My po' boy, Miss Maryon's gwine ter brung yer some happy tidings! I hopes, suah 'nough, 'twon't done upsot ye quite.'"

Involuntarily the two middle-aged women looked at each other and smiled.

Marian spoke first: "I'm at your 'sarvice, suah 'nough,' Miss Lucy, if you will take me for a sister."

"Why," said Lucy, laughing, and winding her arms about Marian's neck in girlish fashion, "I did *that* long ago. I thought it had been quite settled when you first came to Stetten."

"Just like a Southerner, to jump to conclusions!" exclaimed Marian, mischievously.

"Just like a Yankee, never to be able to make up her mind without a 'course of lectures' first," retorted Lucy. "I thank my stars I am a Southern woman."

"And I that I am a Yankee woman," said Marian, merrily. "But we are both too staid, and severe, and old to quarrel. Besides, being teachers, we must set an example—"

"In fractions?" queried Lucy, gayly.

"Look a yere now! What ye mean a-foolin' 'way de time in dis yer style?" inquired Rose, hotly, appearing in the doorway. "'Fo' de law, Miss Maryon, I hab t' high an 'pinion on ye ter b'ar it any longer. I'se a-gwine in dar, ter stay, or else *yer* is. It's f'r *yer* t' say, honey," she added, in a mollified tone, fearing lest she had gone too far.

"*I* am going in," said Marian, gliding through and closing the door.

"Percy, Percy"—she stooped to take his thin, white fingers in hers caressingly—"I've come to tell you something that you ought to have known ages before."

"Some happy tidings?" he said, brightening.

"If you *will* think so. There has been a little room in my heart for you for many years, but I have recently discovered, dear Percy, that you have taken entire possession. What are you to do about it?"

"Is it *all* mine, entirely my own?" he whispered, excitedly.

"Entirely yours, my love, if you still care for it."

"What am I to do?" he repeated; "why, I am going to try to *live;* that's what I'll do. I did not care before. Oh, my darling, my darling! God will send us happy days and years in the future. I grow delirious almost with thinking of it.

"You cannot imagine, as I lay here, with what vividness the old battle scenes reproduce themselves. I have been through them all many times. I heard the shoutings, the imprecations, the whiz of bullets, and the groans of the dying. How callous we grew in those dreadful years! We did believe, my Marian, that wolves would not touch a Yankee corpse. We could even, in our igno-

rant imaginations, spurn the dead like that. You must know the very worst of me—even to my inmost thoughts."

"You are feverish, my love, even now. Do not tell me of these things. It is all in the long ago. Do you have these images and sounds when I am with you?" she inquired, anxiously.

"Never! It is all peace then."

"I am going away no more, Percy. I have but a divided attention to give either you or my school. Can you doubt which duty I will choose? I love you so dearly that I think you will live to forgive me all the pain I have made you suffer.

"Yes, my darling, I feel that there are happy years before us. Together we will work to restore this pleasant old inheritance."

She stooped and kissed him as she spoke, and his dark eyes glowed with pride and pleasure.

"Dar now, chilluns," exclaimed mammy, bustling into the room, "I done hope dar's gwine ter be no more mistakes ob a sim'lar sort—neber no mo'! An' it's time f'r some mo' ob dat ugly smellin' med'cin'. 'Spec's Mas'r Percy won't need ter b' hired t' take it, ef Miss Maryon only hol' it ter his lips."

"No more mistakes," repeated Percy, as he fondly kissed Marian's hand. "To think that, after all, I have won my Yankee school-ma'am!!"

THE END.